

SYRIA: WEIGHING THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 4, 2013

Serial No. 113-113

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/> or
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

82-640PDF

WASHINGTON : 2014

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
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SYRIA: WEIGHING THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 12:15 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ed Royce (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ROYCE. This hearing will come to order. I am going to ask all of the members if you could take your seats at this time. Welcome, Secretary Kerry.

Today we meet to weigh the Obama administration's proposed military response to the Syrian regime's odious use of chemical weapons. I want to thank Secretary Kerry, Secretary Hagel, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dempsey for appearing before us today. And I want to express my appreciation to committee members, Democrats and Republicans, for attending this hearing on short notice.

The President's decision this past weekend to seek an authorization of military force from Congress was not anticipated, but it was welcomed. This committee has no greater responsibility than overseeing the deployment and use of the United States Armed Forces. Since the administration of President John Adams, Congress has acted several times to authorize the use of military force by the President. One thing different here is that the administration's proposal supports a U.S. military response against a country in civil war. Needless to say, this complicates the consideration.

I think we are all troubled by the unfortunate lack of international support. Although the proposed action aims to uphold an international norm, there is no United Nations resolution of support, nor NATO backing.

As we will hear today, the President views striking the Syrian regime as a way to strengthen deterrence against the future use of chemical weapons by Assad and by others. That is an important consideration. There are too many bad actors out there. Countries like Iran are watching. And, yes, a credible threat is key to putting the brakes on Iran's nuclear program.

There are concerns. The President promises a military operation in Syria of limited scope and duration. But the Assad regime would have a say in what happens next. That would be particularly true as President Obama isn't aiming to change the situation on the ground. What are the chances of escalation? Are different scenarios

accounted for? If our credibility is on the line now, as is argued, what about if Assad retaliates? Americans are skeptical of getting near a conflict that, as one witness has noted, is fueled by historic, ethnic, religious, and tribal issues.

The administration's Syria policy doesn't build confidence. For over 2 years U.S. policy has been adrift. Initially, the Obama administration saw Assad as a reformer. Once the revolt started, it backed U.N. diplomacy. And then it bet on a Moscow policy and the thought that Russia would play a constructive role. Predictably, that has not worked.

Over a year ago, President Obama drew, in his words, a red line. Yet only last week did the administration begin to consult with Congress on what that means. Today, the House begins formal consideration of the President's request to use military force in Syria. It is a cliché but true: There are no easy answers. Syria and much of the Middle East are a mess. So we look forward to a thorough and deliberate discussion today, one reflecting the gravity of the issue.

And I will now turn to Ranking Member Engel, who has been ringing the alarm bell on Syria for a long, long time. Ranking Member Engel from New York.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing today.

Secretary Kerry, welcome.

I look forward to this hearing, which addresses the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, the serious threat to the national security interests of the United States and our allies.

Many of you know that I have been following the Middle East for many years, but in particular I have spent an enormous amount of time on Syria. The Syria Accountability Act of 2003, which I authored, is the landmark statement of American policy toward Syria, and imposed sanctions on Damascus in large part due to its chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In March of this year, I introduced a bipartisan bill that would authorize the President to arm fully vetted members of the moderate Syrian opposition. So when I talk about Syria, I am speaking from years of experience, hours of hearings, and scores of meetings with U.S. and foreign officials.

Mr. Chairman, we have all seen the images of the lifeless bodies of Syrian men, women, and children, at least 400 children, neatly lined up in rows, wrapped in white sheets. Their bodies appeared to have no outward physical injuries. Entire families killed in their homes in the blink of an eye. Our intelligence agencies have assessed with high confidence that these innocent civilians were killed by sarin gas, a deadly nerve agent classified as a weapon of mass destruction by the U.N. Security Council and outlawed by the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993. They have also concluded beyond a reasonable doubt that the Assad regime is responsible for the use of these horrific weapons.

I strongly agree with President Obama that the United States must respond to this flagrant violation of international law with a limited military strike to deter the further use of chemical weapons and degrade the Assad regime's ability to use them again.

But the issue we confront today is much bigger than the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We are talking about the credibility of America as a global power. We are talking about sending a clear message to the dictators in Tehran and Pyongyang that there will be serious consequences for flouting the will of the international community and that the U.S. backs its words with action.

Iran in particular is watching very carefully to see if the United States is willing to stand up for its vital interests in the region and the interests of our allies. They are a central player in the Syrian civil war, providing weapons, money, advice, and manpower to the Assad regime, and supporting the intervention of their terrorist proxy Hezbollah. And according to the IAEA, they are moving full speed ahead with efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

I believe that Congress must authorize the Commander in Chief to use limited military force against the Assad regime, and I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting such an authorization. But we should not give the President a blank check. The authorization measure we take up must clarify that any strike should be of a limited nature and that there should absolutely be no American boots on the ground in Syria.

While it is critically important for the U.S. to hold the Assad regime accountable for the use of chemical weapons, we must also focus on developing a larger strategy to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis, support our regional partners, and ultimately find a path forward that brings a lasting peace for the Syrian people.

As I mentioned earlier, in March I introduced the bipartisan Free Syria Act, legislation that would increase humanitarian aid and authorize the President to provide lethal and nonlethal assistance to Syria's moderate opposition. I continue to believe that the moderate opposition is key to Syria's future and that we must redouble our efforts to support them as soon as possible.

I know many Members on both sides of the aisle are struggling with this issue of using force in Syria. We are all trying to do the right thing for our constituents, for our country, and for our national security. Questions of war and peace are always difficult, and I am proud that we are treating them with the utmost seriousness in this committee. But in the days before we take any vote, I encourage my colleagues to ask themselves these questions: If we do not pass the authorization measure, what message will Assad get? What message will Iran receive? Hezbollah? Our allies? We have to live up to our commitments.

So Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for calling this important hearing, and I look forward to Secretary Kerry and to the testimony of our other distinguished witnesses.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Engel.

This afternoon we are pleased to be joined by our Secretary of State, John Kerry. And shortly we will be joined by the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Prior to his appointment, John Kerry served as United States Senator from Massachusetts for 28 years and chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the last 4 years. And without objection, the witnesses' statements, Senator Kerry and those of Secretary Hagel and General Dempsey, will be made part of the

record. Members here will have 5 days to submit statements and questions and extraneous material for the record.

And I would like to note, members, that we have a nearly full committee here with us today. And therefore, we need to work within the time constraints that we have. We are going to ask all members to be mindful of that timer as you ask questions. So we will begin now with Secretary Kerry's testimony.

Mr. Secretary.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN F. KERRY,
SECRETARY OF STATE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Secretary KERRY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, Ranking Member Engel, as the chairman said, an early congressional leader on Syria. And to all the members of the committee let me just say first of all that I have enormous respect for the fact that everybody has returned unexpectedly and hurriedly to come back here to be part of this debate. And on behalf of the administration and the American people, I thank you for doing so.

I think it is—I don't think, I know it is no exaggeration to say that the world is not just watching to see what we decide here, but the world is really watching to see how we decide it, frankly, whether or not we can still make or achieve a single voice speaking for the United States of America, the Congress, and the President of the United States. And they want to know whether or not America is going to rise to this moment, whether or not we will express our position with the unity that this moment demands.

The question of whether or not to authorize force, the chairman referenced my 28 years here, I had a number of occasions to make those votes and a number of occasions to make judgments about Presidents who acted without coming to Congress. And I found that we were and are always stronger when we can act together.

First and foremost, I think it is important to explain to the American people why we are here. And I don't think it can bear enough recognition, as people grapple with this at the end of summer, post-Labor Day, kids going back to school, and a lot of other concerns on their mind. We are here because against the multiple warnings from the President of the United States, warnings from Congress, from many of you, warnings from friends and allies, and even warnings from Russia and Iran that chemical weapons are out of bounds, against all of that the Assad regime, and only, undeniably, the Assad regime, unleashed an outrageous chemical attack against its own citizens. So we are here because a dictator and his family's enterprise, which is what it is, were willing to infect the air of Damascus with a poison that killed innocent mothers and fathers and children, their lives all snuffed out by gas during the early morning hours of August 21st.

Now, some people in a few places, amazingly, against all the evidence, have questioned whether or not this assault on conscience actually took place. And I repeat again here today, unequivocally, only the most willful desire to avoid reality, only the most devious political purpose could assert that this did not occur as described or that the regime did not do it. It did happen, and the Bashar al-Assad regime did it.

Now, I remember Iraq. And Secretary Hagel, who will soon be here, and General Dempsey, obviously, also remember it very well. Secretary Hagel and I both voted in the United States Senate. And so both of us are especially sensitive to never again asking any Member of Congress to vote on faulty intelligence. And that is why our Intelligence Community took time, that is why the President took time to make certain of the facts, and make certain of this case, and to declassify unprecedented amounts of information in order to scrub and rescrub the evidence and present the facts to the American people, and especially to the Congress, and through you, to the American people. We have declassified unprecedented amounts of information, some of it, I might add, not because initially that might have been the instinct in the sense of protecting sources and methods, but some leaked. And after its leaking, we thought it was important to verify whether it was true or not.

So by now you have heard a great deal from me and others in the administration about the comprehensive evidence that we have collected in the days following the attack on August 21st. So I am not going to go through all of it again right now. I am happy to discuss it further if any of you have any questions. But I can tell you beyond a reasonable doubt—and I used to prosecute cases; I ran one of the largest district attorney's offices in America—and I can tell you beyond a reasonable doubt the evidence proves that the Assad regime prepared this attack and that they attacked exclusively opposition-controlled or contested territory.

Now, at some point in the appropriate setting you will learn additional evidence, which came to us even today, which further documents the acknowledgment of various friends of the Assad regime that they know that this happened. Our evidence proves that they used sarin gas that morning, and it proves that they used some of the world's most heinous weapons to kill more than 1,400 innocent people, including at least 426 children.

Now, I am sure that many of you have seen the images yourselves of men and women, the elderly, and children sprawled on a hospital floor, no wounds, no blood, and chaos and desperation around them, none of which could possibly have been contrived. All of that was real. We have the evidence. We know what happened. And there is no question that this would meet the standard by which we send people to jail for the rest of their lives.

So we are here because of what happened. But we are also here not just because of what happened 2 weeks ago, we are here because of what happened nearly a century ago, when in the darkest moments of World War I, when they were over, after the horror of gas warfare, when the majority of the world came together to declare in no uncertain terms that chemical weapons crossed the line of conscience and that they must be banned. And over the years that followed, more than 180 countries, I think it is 184 to be precise, including Iran, Iraq, and Russia, all agreed and joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. Even countries with whom we agree on very little else agreed on this.

Now, some have tried to suggest that the debate that we are having today is about this President's red line, that this is about President Obama's red line. Let me make it as clear as I can to all of you: That is just not true. This is about the world's red line, it is

about humanity's red line, a line that anyone with a conscience should draw, and a line that was drawn nearly 100 years ago, in 1925, when the Chemical Weapons Convention was agreed on.

This debate, I might add to you, is also about Congress' red line. You agreed to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Not all of you were here to vote for it, but the Congress agreed to that. The Congress passed the Syria Accountability Act, which Congressman Engel has referred to and authored. And that act says clearly, and I quote, "Syria's chemical weapons threaten the security of the Middle East and the national security interests of the United States." I think repeatedly Members of Congress have spoken out about the grave consequences if Assad in particular were to use chemical weapons. And both Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi have stated in recent days that the actions of the Assad regime are unacceptable and that the United States has a responsibility to respond.

So as we debate, the world is watching and the world is wondering not whether Assad's regime actually did this—I think that fact is now beyond question—the world is wondering whether the United States of America is going to consent through silence to stand aside while this kind of brutality is allowed to happen without consequence.

In the nearly 100 years since this global commitment against chemical weapons was made, only two tyrants have dared to cross the world's brightest line. Bashar al-Assad has now become the third. And history, I think everyone here knows, holds nothing but infamy for those criminals. And history also reserves very little sympathy for their enablers. And that is the gravity of this moment. That is really what is at stake in the decision that the Congress faces.

Syria, bottom line, is important to America and our security for many reasons. First, you can't overlook the danger that these weapons, as you said in the Syria Accountability Act, pose to the Middle East, to our allies, to our friends. You can't overlook the threat that they face even to the United States ultimately if they fall into the wrong hands or if they are used with impunity. Since President Obama's policy is that Assad must go, it is not insignificant that to deprive or degrade Assad's chemical weapons deprives him of a lethal weapon in this ongoing civil war. In addition, we have important strategic national security interests, not just in preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons, but to avoid the creation of a safe haven or a base of operations for extremists, al-Nusra, others, to use these chemical weapons either against us or against our friends. Forcing Assad to change his calculation about his ability to act with impunity can contribute to his realization that he cannot gas or shoot his way out of his predicament.

Syria is also important because, quite simply, and I can't say this strongly enough to all of you, many of you are parents, you know how lessons are learned by children. Many of you at school may have confronted at one point or a time a bully on the block or in the building. I think, quite simply, common sense and human experience and reality tell us that the risk of not acting is greater than the risk of acting. If we don't take a stand here today, I guarantee you we are more likely to face far greater risks to our security and

a far greater likelihood of conflict that demands our action in the future.

Why? Because we, as confidently as we know what happened in Damascus on August 21, we know that Assad will read our silence, our unwillingness to act as a signal that he can use his weapons with impunity. After all has been said and done, if we don't now, knowing that he has already done this at least 11 times that our Intelligence Community can prove, and here in this grotesque larger event, larger than anything that has happened before, if we back down, if the world backs down, we have sent an unmistakable message of permissiveness.

Iran, I guarantee you, is hoping we look the other way. And surely they will interpret America's unwillingness to act against weapons of mass destruction as an unwillingness to act against weapons of mass destruction. And we will fight for the credibility to make a deterrent against a nuclear weapon as meaningful as it should be without that fight.

North Korea is hoping for ambivalence from the Congress. They are all listening for our silence. So the authorization that President Obama seeks is distinctly and clearly in our national interest, in our national security interest. We need to send to Syria and to the world, to dictators and terrorists, to allies and civilians alike, the unmistakable message that when we say never again we actually don't mean sometimes, we don't mean somewhere, we mean never again.

So this is a vote for accountability, the norms and the laws of the civilized world. That is what this vote is for. And if we don't answer Assad today, we will erode the standard that has protected our troops for a century. Our troops. Our troops in war have been protected by the existence of this prohibition, through World War II, through Korea, through Vietnam, through both Iraq wars. The fact is we have not seen chemical weapons in the battlefield but for the two occasions I mentioned previously. Our troops are protected. This is a standard that we need to enforce to stand up for America's interests.

And I will say to you unequivocally that our allies and our partners are counting on us. The people of Israel, Jordan, and Turkey, each look next door and they see chemical weapons being used. They are one stiff breeze away from the potential of those weapons harming them. They anxiously await our assurance that our word is true. And they await the assurance that if the children lined up in those unbloodied burial shrouds in Damascus were their own children, as they might be if this got out of hand, they want to know that we would keep the world's promise.

As Justice Jackson said in the opening argument at Nuremberg, "The ultimate step in avoiding periodic wars, which are inevitable in a system of international lawlessness, is to make statesmen responsible to the law." If the world's worst despots see that they can flout with impunity prohibitions against the world's worst weapons, then those prohibitions are rendered just pieces of paper. That is what we mean by accountability. And that is, I say to all of you respectfully, that is why we cannot be silent.

Let me be very, very clear. When I walked into this room a person of conscience stood up behind me, as is the ability of people in

our country, and that person said, please don't take us to war, don't take us to another war. I think the three of us sitting here understand that plea as well as any people in this country. Let me be clear, we are not asking America to go to war. And I say that sitting next to two individuals who well know what war is, and there are others here today who know what war is. They know the difference between going to war and what the President is requesting now. We all agree there will be no American boots on the ground. The President has made crystal clear we have no intention of assuming responsibility for Assad's civil war. That is not in the cards. That is not what is here.

The President is asking only for the power to make certain that the United States of America means what we say. He is asking for authorization, targeted and limited, to deter and degrade Bashar al-Assad's capacity to use chemical weapons.

Now, I will make it clear, for those who feel that more ought to be done or that, you know, in keeping with the policy that Assad must go, clearly the degradation of his capacity to use those weapons has an impact on the lethality of the weapons available to him. And it will have an impact on the battlefield. Just today, before coming in here, I read an email to me about a general, the Minister of Defense, former Minister or Assistant Minister, I forget which, who has just defected and is now in Turkey. And there are other defections that we are hearing about the potential of because of the potential that we might take action. So there will be downstream impacts, though that is not the principal purpose of what the President is asking you for.

Now, some will undoubtedly and understandably ask about the unintended consequences of action. Will this drag you in inadvertently? And they fear that a retaliation could lead to a larger conflict. Let me say again, unequivocally, bluntly, if Assad is arrogant enough and foolish enough to retaliate to the consequences of his own criminal activity, the United States and our allies have ample ways to make him regret that decision without going to war. Even Assad's supporters, Russia and Iran, say publicly that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. And guess what? Even Iran and Syria itself acknowledge that these weapons were used. They just pretend that the other guys, who don't even have the capacity to do it, somehow did it.

So some will question the extent of our responsibility to act here. To them I say, when someone kills hundreds of children with a weapon the world has banned, we all are responsible. That is true because of treaties like the Geneva Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. But it is also true because we share a common humanity and a common sense of decency.

This is not the time for armchair isolationism. This is not the time to be spectators to slaughter. This is not the time to give permission to a dictator, who has already used these weapons, the unfettered ability to continue to use them because we stepped back. Neither our country nor our conscience can afford the cost of silence or inaction.

So we have spoken up, the President of the United States has made his decision. The President has decided we need to do this. But in keeping with our Constitution, and the full measure of the

hopes and articulated aspirations of our Founding Fathers, the President is coming to the Congress of the United States, a decision that the American people agree with, and asking the Congress to stand with him and with this administration to stand up for our security, to protect our values, to lead the world with conviction that is clear. That is why we are here. And we look forward to having a rigorous discussion with you in furtherance of that mission.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Kerry follows:]

Testimony to the House Foreign Relations Committee on Syria
Wednesday, September 4, 2013

As prepared for delivery.

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel – an early Congressional leader on Syria – and members of the Committee:

As we convene for this debate, the world is watching not just to see what we decide. It is watching to see how we make this decision – whether in this dangerous world we can still make our government speak with one voice. They want to know if America will rise to this moment and make a difference.

The question of whether to authorize our nation to take military action is simply one of the most important responsibilities of this committee and the Congress. I appreciate that the Committee has returned quickly to address it. You are appropriately focusing with great care and great precision – the only way to approach the potential use of military power.

I. ASSAD’S ATTACK AND THE EVIDENCE

First and foremost, it is important to explain to the American people why we are here. We are here because against multiple warnings from the President of the United States, from the Congress and from our friends and allies, and even from Russia and Iran, the Assad regime – and only, undeniably, the Assad regime – unleashed an outrageous chemical attack against its own citizens. We are here because a dictator and his family’s enterprise, in their lust to hold onto power, were willing to infect the air of Damascus with a poison that killed innocent mothers, fathers and hundreds of their children, their lives all snuffed out by gas during the early morning hours of August 21.

Some, here and there, amazingly, have questioned the evidence of this assault on conscience. I repeat here again today: only the most willful desire to avoid reality can assert that this did not occur as described or that the regime did not do it. It did happen – and the Assad regime did do it.

I remember Iraq. Secretary Hagel remembers Iraq. We were here on Capitol Hill for that vote. And so we are especially sensitive to never again asking any Member of Congress to take a vote on faulty intelligence. That

is why our intelligence community has scrubbed and re-scrubbed the evidence. We have declassified unprecedented amounts of information.

By now, you have heard a great deal from me and others in the Administration about the clear and comprehensive evidence we've collected in the days following the attack on August 21, so I won't go through it again right now. Of course, I am happy to discuss it further and answer any questions you may have. But I can tell you beyond any reasonable doubt that our evidence proves the Assad regime prepared this attack, and that they attacked exclusively opposition-controlled or contested territory.

Our evidence proves that they used Sarin gas that morning. And it proves that the Assad regime used some of the world's most heinous weapons to kill more than 1400 innocent people, including at least 426 children.

I'm sure many of you have seen the images yourselves – men and women, the elderly and children, sprawled on the hospital floor with no wounds, no blood – but all dead. Those scenes of human chaos and desperation were not contrived. They were real.

We have the evidence. We know what happened. For all the lawyers, or former prosecutors, or even anyone who has ever served on a jury – we know these things beyond the reasonable doubt that is the standard with which we send people to jail for life.

II. DEFENDING AN INTERNATIONAL NORM

So we are here because of what happened two weeks ago. But we are also here because of what happened nearly a century ago, in the darkest moments of World War I and after the horror of gas warfare, when the vast majority of the world came together to declare, in no uncertain terms, that chemical weapons crossed a line of conscience and must be banned. Over the years that followed, more than 180 countries – including Iran, Iraq, and Russia – agreed and joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. Even countries with whom we agree on little else, agree with us on that conviction.

Some have tried to suggest the debate we are having today is about President Obama's red line. They're wrong. This debate is about the world's red line – about humanity's red line – a line that anyone with a conscience should draw.

This debate is also about Congress's own red line. You – the United States Congress – agreed to the Chemical Weapons Convention. You – the United States Congress – passed the Syria Accountability Act, which says Syria's chemical weapons "threaten the security of the Middle East and the national security interests of the United States." You – the Congress – have spoken out about grave consequences if Assad in particular used chemical weapons. And both Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi have stated in recent days that the actions of the Assad regime are unacceptable, and that the United States has a responsibility to respond.

And as we debate, the world watches. As you decide, the world wonders – not whether Assad's regime executed the worst chemical-weapons attack of the 21st century – that fact is beyond question. The world wonders whether the United States of America will consent, through silence, to standing aside while this kind of brutality is allowed to happen without consequence.

In the nearly 100 years since the first global commitment against chemical weapons, only two tyrants dared to cross the world's brightest red line. Bashar al-Assad has become the third. History holds nothing but infamy for these criminals – and history reserves little sympathy for their enablers. That is the gravity of this moment. That is the importance of Congress's decision.

III. BROADER STRATEGIC INTEREST

Syria is important to America and our security for many reasons.

First, we cannot overlook the danger chemical weapons pose to a volatile country and volatile region. Since President Obama's policy is that Assad must go, it is not insignificant that to deprive or degrade Assad's chemical weapons deprives him of a lethal weapon in the ongoing civil war.

In addition, we have important strategic national security interests – not just in preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons – but to avoid the creation of a safe haven or base of operations for extremists to use these weapons against us or our friends.

Forcing Assad to change his calculation about his ability to act with impunity can contribute to his realization that he cannot gas or shoot his way out of his predicament.

Syria is important because quite simply, the risk of not acting is greater than the risk of acting. If we don't take a stand here today, we are more likely to face far greater risks to our security and a far greater likelihood of conflict in the future.

Why? Because as confidently as we know what happened in Damascus on August 21, we know that Assad will read our silence as a signal that he can use his weapons with impunity.

And in creating impunity, we will be creating opportunity – the opportunity for other dictators and terrorists to pursue their own weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

Iran is hoping we look the other way – our inaction would surely give them a permission slip for nuclear proliferation. Hizbollah is hoping isolationism wins here. North Korea is hoping ambivalence carries the day. They are all listening for our silence.

If we do not answer Assad today, we will erode the standard that has protected our troops for a century. We will invite more dangerous tests down the road.

Our allies and partners are counting on us. The people of Israel, Jordan and Turkey each look next door and are counting on us. They anxiously await our assurance that our word is true. They await the assurance that if the children lined up in unbloodied burial shrouds were their own, that we would keep the world's promise.

So the authorization President Obama seeks is in our national security interest.

We must send to Syria and to the world – to dictators and terrorists, to allies and civilians alike – the unmistakable message that when we say “never again,” we don't mean “sometimes” or “somewhere.” Never means never.

IV. THIS IS ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

This is a vote for accountability. Norms and laws that keep the civilized world civil mean nothing if they are not enforced.

As Justice Jackson said in his opening argument at Nuremberg, “The ultimate step in avoiding periodic wars, which are inevitable in a system of international lawlessness, is to make statesmen responsible to the law.”

If the world’s worst despots see they can flout with impunity prohibitions against the world’s worst weapons, then these prohibitions are just pieces of paper.

That is what we mean by accountability. This is why we cannot be silent.

V. THIS IS NOT A DECLARATION OF WAR

Let me be clear: We are not asking America to go to war. I say that sitting next to two men, Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey, who know what war is. There are others here today who know what war is. They know the difference between going to war and what the President is requesting now.

We all agree there will be no American boots on the ground. The President has made crystal clear: we have no intention of assuming responsibility for Syria’s civil war.

He is asking only for the power to make certain that the United States means what we say. He is asking for authorization to degrade and deter Bashar al-Assad’s capacity to use chemical weapons.

VI. UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Some will, undoubtedly and understandably, ask about the unintended consequences of action. Some fear a retaliation that leads to a larger conflict. Let me put it bluntly: If Assad is arrogant enough and foolish enough to retaliate to the consequences of his own criminal activity, the United States and our allies have ample ways to make him regret that decision without going to war. Even Assad’s supporters, Russia and Iran, say publicly that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

Some will also question the extent of our responsibility. To them I say, when someone kills hundreds of children with a weapon the world has banned, we are all responsible. That is true because of treaties like the Geneva Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention – but it is also true because we share a common humanity and a common decency.

VII. CONCLUSION

This is not the time for armchair isolationism. This is not the time to be spectators to a slaughter. Neither our country nor our conscience can afford the cost of silence.

We have spoken up against unspeakable horror. Now we must stand up and act. We must protect our security, protect our values, and lead the world with conviction that is clear. Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

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Chairman ROYCE. We have been joined by Secretary Hagel, who before being appointed Secretary of Defense served in the United States Senate from 1996 until 2009. He is the recipient of two Purple Hearts for his service in Vietnam. And we have been joined by General Dempsey. From platoon leader to Commandant Commander, he has served in the United States Army for over 40 years, and now serves as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs. We will go to our Secretary of Defense, Mr. Hagel, first.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHUCK HAGEL, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Secretary HAGEL. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Engel, members of the committee, thank you. And General Dempsey and I also apologize for being late. The other side of the Capitol held us up, but we are much better for it. So thank you for your understanding.

In the coming days, as we all know, Congress will debate how to respond to the most recent chemical weapons attack in Syria, a large-scale sarin gas assault perpetrated by the Syrian Government against its own people. I welcome this debate, and I strongly support President Obama's decision to seek congressional authorization for the use of force in Syria.

As each of us knows, committing the country to using military force is the most difficult and important decision America's leaders can make. All of those who are privileged to serve our Nation and have the responsibility in many ways to serve our country, but the primary responsibility is to ask the tough questions before any military commitment is made. The American people must be assured that their leaders are acting according to U.S. national interests, with well-defined military objectives, and with an understanding of the risks and consequences involved. The President, along with his entire national security team, asked those tough questions before we concluded that the United States should take military action against Syrian regime targets.

I want to address very briefly, Mr. Chairman, before we get to your questions, how we reached this decision by clarifying the U.S. interests at stake, our military objectives, and the risks of not acting at this critical juncture. As President Obama said, the use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only an assault on humanity, it is a serious threat to America's national security interests and those of our closest allies. The Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons poses grave risks to our friends and partners along Syria's borders, including Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq. If Assad is prepared to use chemical weapons against his own people, we have to be concerned that terrorist groups like Hezbollah, which has forces fighting in Syria supporting the Assad regime, could acquire them and use them.

This risk of chemical weapons proliferation poses a direct threat to our friends and partners, and to U.S. personnel in the region. We cannot afford for Hezbollah or any terrorist group determined to strike the United States to have incentives to acquire or use these chemical weapons. The Syrian regime's actions risk eroding the nearly century-old international norm against the use of chem-

ical weapons, a norm that has helped protect United States forces and our homeland.

Weakening this norm could embolden other regimes to acquire or use chemical weapons. For example, North Korea maintains a massive stockpile of chemical weapons that threaten our treaty ally, the Republic of South Korea, and the 28,000 U.S. troops stationed on the border. I have just returned from Asia, where I had a very serious and long conversation with South Korea's Defense Minister about the threat that North Korea's stockpile of chemical weapons presents to them. Our allies throughout the world must be assured that the United States will fulfill its security commitments. Given these threats to our national security, the United States must demonstrate through our actions that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

The President has made clear that our military objectives in Syria would be to hold the Assad regime accountable, degrade its ability to carry out these kinds of attacks, and deter the regime from further use of chemical weapons. The Department of Defense has developed military options to achieve these objectives, and we have positioned U.S. assets throughout the region to successfully execute the mission. We believe we can achieve them with a military action that would be limited in duration and scope. General Dempsey and I have assured the President that U.S. forces will be ready to act whenever the President gives the order.

We are also working with our allies and our partners in this effort. Key partners, including France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other friends in the region have assured us of their strong support for U.S. action.

In defining our military objectives, we have made clear that we are not seeking to resolve the underlying conflict in Syria through direct military force. Instead, we are contemplating actions that are tailored to respond to the use of chemical weapons. A political solution created by the Syrian people is the only way to ultimately end the violence in Syria, and Secretary Kerry is leading international efforts to help the parties in Syria move toward a negotiated transition.

We are also committed to doing more to assist the Syrian opposition. But Assad must be held accountable for using these weapons in defiance of the international community. Having defined America's interests and our military objectives, we also must examine the risks and the consequences.

As we all know, there are always risks in taking action. But there are also risks with inaction. The Assad regime, under increasing pressure by the Syrian opposition, could feel empowered to carry out even more devastating chemical weapons attacks. Chemical weapons make no distinction between combatants and innocent civilians, and inflict the worst kind of indiscriminate suffering, as we have recently seen. A refusal to act would undermine the credibility of America's other security commitments, including the President's commitment to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

The word of the United States must mean something. It is vital currency in foreign relations and international and allied commitments. Every witness here today at this table, Secretary Kerry,

General Dempsey, and myself, as Secretary Kerry has noted, have served in uniform, fought in war, and seen its ugly realities up close. We understand that a country faces few decisions as grave as using military force. We are not unaware of the costs and the ravages of war. But we also understand that America must protect its people and its national interests. That is our highest responsibility.

All of us who have the privilege and responsibility of serving this great Nation owe the American people, and especially those wearing the uniform of our country, a vigorous debate on how America should respond to the horrific chemical weapons attack in Syria. I know everyone on this committee agrees and takes their responsibility of office just as seriously as the President and everyone at this table.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Hagel follows:]

AS PREPARED – EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CHUCK HAGEL
OPENING STATEMENT ON SYRIA
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2013**

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, thank you for convening this hearing.

In the coming days, Congress will debate how to respond to the most recent chemical weapons attack in Syria – a large-scale, and heinous, sarin gas assault perpetrated by the Syrian government against its own people.

I welcome this debate and I strongly support President Obama's decision to seek congressional authorization for the use of force in Syria.

As each of us knows, committing the country to using military force is the most difficult decision America's leaders can make. All of those who are privileged to serve our nation have a responsibility to ask tough questions before that commitment is made. The American people must be assured that their leaders are acting according to U.S. national interests, with well-defined military objectives, and with an understanding of the risks and consequences involved.

The President, along with his entire national security team, asked those tough questions before we concluded that the United States should take military action against Syrian regime targets. I want to address how we reached this decision by clarifying the U.S. interests at stake, our military objectives, and the risks of not acting at this critical juncture.

1. U.S. National Interests

As President Obama said, the use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only an assault on humanity – it is a serious threat to America's national security interests and those of our closest allies.

The Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons poses grave risks to our friends and partners along Syria's borders – including Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. If Assad is prepared to use chemical weapons against his own people, we have to be concerned that terrorist groups like Hezbollah, which has forces in Syria supporting the Assad regime, could acquire them. This risk of chemical weapons proliferation poses a direct threat to our friends and partners, and to U.S. personnel in the region. We cannot afford for Hezbollah or any terrorist group determined to strike the United States to have incentives to acquire or use chemical weapons.

The Syrian regime's actions risk eroding the nearly century-old international norm against the use of chemical weapons – a norm that has helped protect the United States homeland and American forces operating across the globe from these terrible weapons. Weakening this norm could embolden other regimes to acquire or use chemical weapons. For example, North Korea maintains a massive stockpile of chemical weapons that threatens our treaty ally, the Republic of Korea, and the 28,000 U.S. troops stationed there. I have just returned from Asia, where I had a very serious and long conversation with South Korea's Defense Minister about the threat that North Korea's stockpile of chemical weapons presents to them. Our allies throughout the world must be assured that the United States will fulfill its security commitments.

AS PREPARED – EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

2. U.S. Military Objectives

Given these threats to our national security, the United States must demonstrate through our actions that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

The President has made clear that our military objectives in Syria would be to hold the Assad regime accountable, degrade its ability to carry out these kinds of attacks, and deter the regime from further use of chemical weapons.

The Department of Defense has developed military options to achieve these objectives, and we have positioned U.S. assets throughout the region to successfully execute this mission. We believe we can achieve them with a military action that would be limited in duration and scope.

General Dempsey and I have assured the President that U.S. forces will be ready to act whenever the President gives the order. We are also working with our allies and partners in this effort. Key partners, including France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other friends in the region, have assured us of their strong support for U.S. action.

In defining our military objectives, we have made clear that we are not seeking to resolve the underlying conflict in Syria through direct military force. Instead we are contemplating actions that are tailored to respond to the use of chemical weapons. A political solution created by the Syrian people is the only way to ultimately end the violence in Syria, and Secretary Kerry is leading international efforts to help the parties in Syria move towards a negotiated transition. We are also committed to doing more to assist the Syrian opposition. But Assad must be held accountable for using these weapons in defiance of the international community.

3. Risks of Inaction

Having defined America's interests and our military objectives, we also must examine the risks and consequences of action, as well as the consequences of inaction.

There are always risks in taking action, but there are also risks with inaction. The Assad regime, under increasing pressure by the Syrian opposition, could feel empowered to carry out even more devastating chemical weapons attacks. Chemical weapons make no distinction between combatants and innocent civilians, and inflict the worst kind of indiscriminate suffering, as we have recently seen.

A refusal to act would undermine the credibility of America's other security commitments – including the President's commitment to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The word of the United States must mean something. It is vital currency in foreign relations and international and allied commitments.

Every witness here today – Secretary Kerry, General Dempsey, and myself – has served in uniform, fought in war, and seen its ugly realities up close. We understand that a country faces few decisions as grave as using military force. We are not unaware of the costs and ravages of war. But we also understand that America must protect its people and its national interests. That is our highest responsibility.

All of us who have the privilege and responsibility of serving this great nation owe the American people, and especially those wearing the uniform of our country, a vigorous debate on how America should respond to the horrific chemical weapons attack in Syria. I know everyone on this committee agrees, and takes their responsibility of office just as seriously as the President and everyone at this table.

Thank you.

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Chairman ROYCE. And we also appreciate General Dempsey being with us today to answer any members' questions.

And if I could go, Secretary Kerry, to you for a question. Something I referenced in my opening statement, other countries are watching. And as I understand it, the administration and you, as a matter of fact, have been in contact with the governments, in discussions with South Korea, with Turkey, with Saudi Arabia, with Israel, and I have read several others in the press. I was going to ask you the communications that you are having. What are they communicating to you about this incident when you talk to these governments?

Secretary KERRY. Mr. Chairman, I am very happy to share that with you. Let me just say at the outset, I mentioned an email I got coming in. The same news outlet, Reuters, has now said that the Syrian Government is saying that the defection hasn't taken place. So who knows whether it has or it hasn't.

What I do know is this: The intelligence is very clear, and in other settings I urge you to go and look at it, that there are currently defections taking place. I think there are something like 60 to 100 in the last day or so, officers and enlisted personnel. And there are serious questions taking place among the so-called elite of Syria about whether or not Bashar al-Assad has kind of run the table here too far, and that there are serious questions about the future. I just put that on the table for you to think about.

Chairman ROYCE. We understand. But the views of South Korea, the views of the Governments of Turkey—

Secretary KERRY. We have reached out to over 100 countries. We continue to reach out to these countries. Fifty-three countries or organizations have acknowledged that chemical weapons were used, and 37 of them have said so publicly. That will grow as the evidence that we released yesterday becomes more prevalent. I will be meeting with the foreign ministers of Europe, the 28 foreign ministers in Vilnius on Saturday. This will clearly be a topic of discussion. And many of them have had reservations, waiting for the evidence. So I see many more countries joining.

Thirty-one countries or organizations have stated publicly or privately that the Assad regime is responsible for this attack and that was before our evidence package was put together. And 34 countries or organizations have indicated that if the allegations prove to be true they would support some form of action against Syria.

Now, to be more specific and bear down on the President's proposal and this particular action, currently in the region there are a number of countries, friends of ours, that have offered to be part of this operation, and those countries can speak for themselves. But there are more countries who have offered to be part of this operation than our military currently believes we need to have part of it in order to effect the operation. Obviously, there is an interest in having an international, multinational effort, and I think the President is committed to doing so. But there are friends of ours, including France, as you know, which is sticking with its position, and others in the region who are prepared to be part of this operation with us.

Chairman ROYCE. Let me ask a question of our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dempsey. One of the first reactions that I

have gotten from members here was on the open-ended nature of that authorization. And as you know, on the Senate side there is now discussion. We all know there is no support for boots on the ground on the House side. But it doesn't reference it in the authorization. Now they are. They are taking that off the table. They are looking at a short timeframe. They are talking about a comprehensive Syrian strategy. And resolutions here on the House side likewise are coming at this from a different direction than the original authorization. I would like your views. Can you express your perception or your response to the initiatives that you now see or the resolutions that you now see on the Senate side and here on the House side on rewriting the original authorization?

General DEMPSEY. Yeah. Thanks, Chairman. I have made it a point of importance not to discuss my personal views about the resolution. That is for you to determine. I will tell you that militarily, the broader the resolution the more options I can provide. But that said, I will also assure you that the President has given me quite clear guidance that this will be a limited and focused operation, not an open-ended operation.

Chairman ROYCE. Well, I think that—and I will maybe go to Secretary Hagel there for a few comments on this, if you could sum up—but again, it is very clear on the House side there is no support for boots on the ground and the desire to rewrite the authorization. Your response?

Secretary HAGEL. I saw one draft this morning, Mr. Chairman, from the Senate side. I have not seen anything since, over the last few hours. I know all of our agencies represented at this table, as well as the National Security Council, are working with the appropriate committee people. And I have confidence that we will be able to come up with a mutually agreed upon resolution to be able to accomplish the objective.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go to Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Kerry and Secretary Hagel, perhaps you could answer this. I know Secretary Kerry referred to it in his opening remarks. I believe, like you, Mr. Secretary, that American credibility on the international stage hangs in the balance. And while it is crucial to make sure that Assad never uses chemical weapons again, I believe there is something even greater at stake, and that is the message we send to Iran as they continue to pursue a dangerous nuclear weapons capability. Iran is watching how we respond to the Syrian regime's crossing of the President's red line and of the world's red line, and the Supreme Leader is also aware that President Obama is keeping all options on the table, including utilizing military force to prevent Iran from possessing nuclear weapons. So I would like to ask you, what will Iran's reaction be if we don't act now? Will they see our threat to stop their nuclear weapons program as hollow and will our effort to stop the Iranian bomb be put in jeopardy? And do you think their calculus on their nuclear program will change based on what we do now?

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, there is an enormous amount of question in the region, not just by Iranians, but by Emiratis, Saudis, Kuwaitis, Qataris and others as to whether or not the United States of America means what it says. And they ask me all

the time, are you guys serious about Iran? I am sure when they come and visit with you, they look to you for reassurances with respect to America's position on Iran.

There is no question in my mind that the President of the United States does not bluff, and he is committed that Iran will not have a nuclear weapon. But if we fail to enforce a standard that has been in existence for almost 100 years regarding weapons of mass destruction we are putting that into question in the minds of a lot of observers and creating problems for ourselves, where we may get closer to a test that cannot be constrained or managed as a consequence of the misinterpretation of our word today. So I believe it is critical.

Just two other things I would say. Without any question in my mind, if we fail to pass this, those who are working with us today with the Syrian opposition, and I know Congressman Engel, you know this, we have been working hard to keep them from funding bad elements, whether it is al-Nusra or others, which they have funded out of frustration because they think they are the best fighters and the only people who are going to get the job done of getting rid of Assad. And so if we back off and we fail to enforce our word here, I promise you that the discipline we have put in place with respect to the moderate opposition versus bad guys will dissipate immediately and people will resort to anybody they can find to help them accomplish their goal, and we would have created more extremism and a greater problem down the road. So the word will be misinterpreted in many ways, not just Iran, Congressman.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, perhaps Secretary Hagel could answer this, Secretary Kerry just mentioned the opposition. And I put in a bill several months ago which would allow us to aid the well-vetted Syrian opposition. I don't think that the potential of military force we are considering can be looked upon in a vacuum. I think that this operation must be utilized as one piece of a larger comprehensive Syria strategy. So let me ask you, Mr. Secretary, as we downgrade Syria's ability to use chemical weapons, will we in turn be degrading Assad's ability to attack and suppress the opposition, and will we degrade Assad's air force so that he cannot continue to use the sky to murder his own people?

Secretary HAGEL. Congressman, I would respond this way. You are correct as you assess this one option that we are debating today in that it works in parallel with a number of other tracks that are ongoing. I think most all of us believe, the President believes, everyone at this table believes there is no military solution in Syria. It is going to require a political resolution. In that regard, the actions that we would take would be in parallel to the opposition, strengthening of the opposition. It would be in parallel to what Secretary Kerry noted, the continuing defections from Assad's military and from his regime. It would be in parallel with the international community continuing to strengthen their voices and join with us in this condemnation. All the other consequences that would come from this would be part of it. So that is the way I would answer your question. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go now to the chairman emeritus of this committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, gentlemen.

We have been aware of Assad's chemical weapons stockpile for years, yet we failed to hold him accountable. The United Nations has been completely useless at effecting any change in Syria, thanks in no small part to Russia and China's persistent stonewalling at the Security Council. And Congress has certainly had our fair share of missed opportunities. Last Congress, the House passed the Iran, North Korea, Syria Nonproliferation Reform and Modernization Act overwhelmingly, with a vote of 418 and only 2 against. Yet, Mr. Secretary, the Senate failed to take any action on it.

Had the United States been taking a more proactive role in Syria by instituting strict sanctions against Assad's regime it may have changed his calculations on the use of chemical weapons. In order to justify action now against his regime and risk further escalating the conflict the President must clearly identify what our national security interests are. What are our objectives in limited and targeted air strikes? What does degradation look like? And what will we do if the initial action does not yield the intended result?

One Senate version of the resolution has a limitation on ground troops for combat operations. This sounds like it leaves open the possibility of boots on the ground for something other than combat operations, like special operations. Is this intentional? Will you confirm that under no circumstances will we place boots on the ground in Syria?

We all know we are in a tough fiscal environment. Even a limited engagement, if it ends up being only limited, could potentially cost taxpayers billions. With members of the Arab League so eager for U.S. participation, have they offered to offset any of the costs associated with this action?

Iran and North Korea are carefully watching our next move. If we say that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable, yet we fail to act, this will embolden Iran's pursuit of nuclear breakout capabilities. A refusal to act in Syria, after the President has set such a clear red line, will be seen as a green light by the Iranian regime, who will see that we don't have the will to back up our words.

So, gentlemen, what about boots on the ground? The Arab League, are they going to pony up? Our objectives? And lastly, there is some rumor circulating today that perhaps the House will not have a vote on authorization, the Senate will and perhaps not on the House side. If you could comment on that.

Secretary KERRY. Madam Chairwoman, I don't know anything about this rumor, so I am not going to comment on it because it is a rumor. And it is the first I have heard of it.

With respect to Arab countries offering to bear costs and to assist, the answer is profoundly yes, they have. That offer is on the table.

With respect to boots on the ground, profoundly no. There will be no boots on the ground. The President has said that again and again. And there is nothing in this authorization that should contemplate it. And we reiterate no boots on the ground.

In terms of what you do if it doesn't work, I think I will let General Dempsey speak to the question of targeting, which he can't go

into in detail. But we have absolute confidence that what our military undertakes to do, if it is ordered to do so, will degrade the capacity of Assad to use these weapons and serve as a very strong deterrence. And if it doesn't, then there are subsequent possibilities as to how you could reinforce that.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And the details on the offer and the proposal on the table, what are the figures that we are talking about?

Secretary KERRY. Well, we don't know what action we are engaged in right now. But they have been quite significant. I mean very significant. In fact, some of them have said that if the United States is prepared to go do the whole thing the way we have done it previously in other places, they will carry that cost. That is how dedicated they are to this. Obviously, that is not in the cards and nobody is talking about it, but they are talking in serious ways about getting this job done.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And in terms of other countries being in the fight with us with these limited strikes, what other—the time is over? Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. The time is up. And we better go to Mr. Meeks of New York in order to get through the full panel.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman ROYCE. Oh, Mr. Sherman is next. Mr. Sherman of California then.

Mr. SHERMAN. The President drew a red line. Presidents often draw red lines in order to deter action. Usually they deter that action, to our benefit and at no cost. When the President drew that red line, I am not aware of anyone in this room who criticized it or disassociated themselves from that red line. Now Assad has crossed that red line, it is America's red line. If we do not act, Assad will use chemical weapons many times in the future. They may be decisively successful for him, and dictators for decades to come will learn from Assad's lesson that chemical weapons on civilians used on a mass scale can be effective and that the 1925 protocol against their use is a dead letter.

In picking targets, gentlemen, you are going to be torn between the germane and the effective. Germane would be directly related to chemical weapons. But the fact is we want Assad to control, store, and keep control of his chemical weapons. And so you will be seeking out targets somehow related to the creation, storage, control, or delivery of chemical weapons. And I think that instead you should focus on punishing and deterring Assad by hitting valuable assets that will demonstrate to him that it was a military mistake to hit Ghouta with chemical weapons. Even air or naval assets unrelated to the delivery of chemical weapons will make that lesson clear to him.

We have all learned a searing lesson from over 4,000 casualties in Iraq, but we should be aware that there are 150 occasions—and, Mr. Chairman, without objection, I would like to put into the record a CRS listing and analysis of 150 occasions in the last 40 years when America has deployed its forces into dangerous or hostile situations. And in most of those, we had a limited purpose, limited deployment, and the cost was so limited that we have forgotten

the incident involved. And I hope very much that what you are planning is something much more along those lines than Iraq.

The resolution that was sent to us on August 31 is obviously flawed. I sent Secretary Kerry amendments the next day, on September 1st. Our colleagues, Mr. Van Hollen and Mr. Connolly, have proposed a substitute, as has Senator Menendez. I would like to explore with you what elements a good resolution would have, knowing that this resolution adds to the authority you already have under the War Powers Resolution of 1973.

Is it acceptable for this resolution to confirm what you have already said, and that is that the resolution itself does not add in any way to the powers of the President to put boots on the ground in Syria? Is that an acceptable position? Secretary Kerry?

Secretary KERRY. Absolutely.

Mr. SHERMAN. Would a time limit of 60 days, indicating that you might have other authorities to act beyond those 60 days, you might come back to Congress, but what we are authorizing now is limited to 60 days, would that be acceptable?

Secretary KERRY. We would prefer that you have some kind of trigger in there with respect to if he were to come back and use chemical weapons again, that there would be a capacity to respond to that. If you just have a fixed—

Mr. SHERMAN. Well, you could always come back to Congress or you could have a provision every time he uses chemical weapons you get another 60 days.

Secretary KERRY. That would be acceptable.

Mr. SHERMAN. The second, the first, or—

Secretary KERRY. The second.

Mr. SHERMAN. And, finally, would you accept a provision that said that you may want to pursue regime change with other authorities that you have, including arming the rebels under other authority that you have, but that this resolution is limited to actions designed to punish and deter the use of chemical weapons and not to change the outcome of the civil war?

Secretary KERRY. The preference of the President is to have this a narrow authorization so that nobody gets confused here and people aren't asked to vote for two different things. One thing the President wants is the capacity to enforce the international norm with respect to chemical weapons and to make our word with respect to that meaningful to the region.

Mr. SHERMAN. Well, I know your staff will be working with Congress to draft a resolution, and the more carefully tailored it is, the more narrow it is, the more likely you are to actually succeed in the House.

I hope very much, Mr. Chairman, that we are marking up a resolution in this committee and considering in regular order.

And, finally, for the record, if you could explain—

Chairman ROYCE. Well, yeah, afterwards we can introduce the questions for the record, but we need to go now to Mr. Smith, chairman of the Africa Subcommittee.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

A New York Times editorial yesterday, Mr. Secretary, or Secretaries, said that it was "alarming" that President Obama did not

“long ago put into place with our allies and partners a plan for international action.”

Their word, “alarming,” that we have failed over the course of the last several years to do what ought to have been done. That is a New York Times editorial—hardly a conservative newspaper.

I have three specific questions, and I would ask that you, to the best of your ability, answer all three.

Yesterday, Secretary Kerry, you testified that the Obama administration wanted to make him—that is Assad, I presume—regret the decision to use chemical weapons as he has done on August 21st and, as we all know, on previous occasions as well. First question: Do we have clear proof that Assad himself ordered it?

Second question: In an interview with Chris Wallace on Sunday, you said that, “Actually, Chris, at the very instant the planes were in the air on Kosovo, there was a vote in the House of Representatives, and the vote did not carry.” That is true. The House of Representatives voted against force against Slobodan Milosevic. Your word, “very instant,” however, is certainly an elastic term. The vote was a full month later. Clinton and NATO’s bombing of Serbia began on March 24th, and the House voted against it on April 28th.

During that time, there were significant assurances that the entire operation would be of short duration, very limited. And I know many people had thought, including in Brussels at NATO headquarters, that it would last just a few days. It lasted 78 days. Four hundred and eighty-eight to five hundred and twenty-seven civilian deaths when the bombing occurred in Serbia. And, significantly, Milosevic’s retaliation was the invasion of Kosovo, and that invasion killed about 10,000 people and put most Kosovar Albanians to flight. And I, like perhaps you and others, visited them as refugees.

How do you define “limited” and “short duration”? And what might Assad do in retaliation? And what contingency plans do we have when he attacks in other areas that we may not have anticipated?

And, finally, I plan on introducing a resolution when we reconvene to authorize the President to establish a specialized court, the Syrian war crimes tribunal, to help hold accountable all those on either side, including Assad, who have slaughtered and raped in Syria. I am wondering how you might think about that, as well, whether or not the administration would support such a court.

We have learned lessons from the special court in Sierra Leon. We have learned lessons from the Rwandan court and certainly learned lessons from the court in Yugoslavia. It has to be immediate. And I think it could be a rallying point. You yourself said, Mr. Secretary, you would send them to jail. Well, let’s send them to jail. But killing people and not targeting Assad himself may be accountability, but I think there are other alternatives.

I yield.

Secretary KERRY. Well, Congressman, I actually didn’t have time yesterday, because of our testimony, to read the New York Times editorial, so I would like to read it. But there is a plan in place. The London 11, so-called, have been working over some period of time, working internationally.

Last year, Secretary Clinton joined in in convening, with the Russians and others, a meeting in Geneva that resulted in the Geneva Communiqué, which set up a process for transition in Syria. And that is what we are currently pursuing now together with our allies and friends in this endeavor, and that includes France, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, the Emirates, Saudis, and others.

So there is an international effort. It may not be—it is not working as well as we would like; it hasn't had its impact yet fully. But, in addition to that, we have seen the President take steps in response to the initial attacks of chemical weapons to increase lethal aid to the opposition. That is now known, so—

Mr. SMITH. I am almost out of time, with all due respect.

Secretary KERRY. Okay. Well, let me—

Mr. SMITH. Limited, short duration, a special tribunal on war crimes for Syria?

Secretary KERRY. I understand there been conversations already with Syrians and other countries about a special court. Perhaps we can have more luck with that. I would certainly welcome an effort to hold people accountable for those kinds of abuses, but, as you know, the international courts have not fared well with both parties in the Congress.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Meeks of New York.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the interest of time, I also would like to submit my statement for—

Chairman ROYCE. Without objection.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you.

First let me state that I agree with the President's decision to come to Congress for the authorization for the use of U.S. military force to address the use of chemical weapons by Syrian forces. I think it was the appropriate decision both constitutionally and morally.

And in making my determination on the use of force, I try to look at it through both a short- and long-term interest in the security of America as my paramount focus. To that end, I believe that the use of chemical weapons by the Assad region is indeed a flagrant violation of international norms against the use of such weapons, and this and other repugnant acts by Syrian forces are indeed against U.S. interests.

But it is not only against U.S. interests; it is also against the international interests. So if we act in a unilateral way, I have huge concerns; that if there is a violation, we should act, especially militarily, in a multilateral way.

We have regional countries—and I have been listening to the testimony here, but I don't know where NATO is. At least I have heard NATO, who basically said they have condemned it, but I don't hear them saying that they will step up with us militarily. I have not heard the Arab union, the Arab League, step up with us.

I have heard people condemn—in fact, Mr. Secretary, you said the world is watching what we are doing, but I have yet to hear some concrete things of what the world is doing. I am fearful that they will isolate the United States, where we are only doing some—

thing unilateral while the world just sits back and watch, when there is an international violation that took place.

And you stated, Mr. Secretary, that it matters today that we are working as an international community to rid the world of its worst weapons. And I couldn't agree with you more. But I don't see or hear, unless there is another setting that I need to be in, where the world is stepping up and agreeing to act with us militarily, not just condemning the acts, but acting on that condemnation of the acts with us in a military fashion.

And you stated during the hearing yesterday, Mr. Secretary, you indicated that while Russia has obstructed efforts to react to Assad's regime's use of chemical weapons, there are other ways that Russia may yet prove helpful. Would you please elaborate on what, if any, role Russia has or can play in bringing about a political solution in Syria? And how is Russia being engaged, given the Obama administration's correct assertion that there is no military solution to the crisis in Syria?

And quickly, General Dempsey, you know, I have serious concerns, as I have stated, about any action that is not broadly supported internationally. And one of my concerns is the possibility of unintended consequences, including the prospects of prolonged military engagement.

And in mid-August, you sent Representative Engel a letter. You expressed that there are certainly actions that the U.S. could take, short of tipping the balance of Syrian conflict, that could impose a cost on them for abhorrent behavior. You also indicated that at least some of those options would, and I quote, "escalate and potentially further commit the United States to the conflict. It would not be militarily decisive, but it would commit us decisively to the conflict."

Can you elaborate on what you meant when you stated that we could be decisively committed to the conflict? And if the U.S. commits a limited military strike in Syria, how do you minimize the possibility of prolonged commitment? And if the international supports remain as limited as it seems now, are there risks of a longer engagement which are more pronounced?

Secretary KERRY. Go ahead, General.

General DEMPSEY. You are going to have to take yours for the record, I predict.

Congressman, in the time remaining, I think it is the focus and the purpose of the military action that will give us the best chance of limiting it in time and in commitment.

In other words, my letter to Representative Engel talked about answering the question what would it take to tip the scales in favor of the opposition. If we were to take military action ourselves to support the opposition, that is a very long—that is a long prospect.

What we are talking about here is not that. The purpose is to deter and degrade for the specific purpose of chemical weapons. And I think it is the purpose that allows us to say with some confidence that our intent is to limit it.

Now, that is not to say that I discount the risk of escalation, which I can never discount, but I can tell you we have mitigated it to as low as possible.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go now to Mr. Chabot, chairman of the Asia Subcommittee.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, gentlemen.

I know you would like me to tell you about the number of people that came up to me in the airport this morning and urged me to stand with President Obama on the Syrian issue, or that my phones have been ringing off the hook with callers supporting the administration's position, but I think we all know that wouldn't be accurate.

Nevertheless, I am trying to approach your potential resolution with an open mind and will certainly consider any argument that the administration might make in favor of the use of force against the Assad regime.

That being said, I do, however, have some serious concerns and I think many of my colleagues on this committee probably share a number of them. Whether we ultimately support a resolution on the use of force or not will depend on how these concerns are addressed in the coming days by the administration, and this, of course, today is part of that process. I have a number of questions, so I will forgo a long statement and get right into them.

Secretary Kerry, President Obama did not come to Congress seeking a resolution on the use of force in Libya. What is the difference between Libya and Syria when it comes to seeking congressional authorization?

Secretary KERRY. The difference is that, in the case of Libya, you had already passed a U.N. Security Council resolution and an Arab League resolution and a Gulf States Cooperation resolution, and you had a man who we knew was prone to follow through on his word promising that he was going to kill like dogs all of the people in Benghazi. And so there was an emergency and an urgency to responding, in which the United States provided air support while the French and the British carried out the mission.

So I think, under those circumstances, the President felt the urgency, the emergency of protecting life, and a capacity that had already been granted through the international community. This is different—

Mr. CHABOT. Let me ask you this.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. Which is why he is coming to Congress.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Let me ask you this. Had the British Parliament not rejected Prime Minister Cameron on the Syria issue, would President Obama have bothered to come to Congress?

Secretary KERRY. Oh, I believe he absolutely would have. I think the President was thinking about this. There were discussions, to some degree, about whether or not it should happen. He hadn't made up his mind. He certainly didn't announce it to us. But my personal belief is, yes—

Mr. CHABOT. Okay.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. I think the President believed it was important. And there were people making that argument, particularly on his legal team.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, you indicated that you didn't have time to read the New York Times editorial today, so I assume you probably haven't had time to read Tom Friedman's column in today's New York Times.

Secretary KERRY. Actually, I am familiar with his column today.

Mr. CHABOT. All right. Well, let me refer to that piece. I don't always agree with Mr. Friedman; in fact, I seldom do. But I tend to agree with his assessment of the Syrian situation today in which he says, "Rather than firing some missiles into Syria, a more effective measure would be arming and assisting the more moderate rebel groups in Syria."

My only concern is, as Mr. Smith and some others have already referred to today, it may be too late for that, as failing to arm these groups months or even years ago has allowed al-Qaeda-connected rebel groups to become more influential and powerful.

Would you comment, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary KERRY. Absolutely. I am delighted to. And I think that what Tom Friedman said—and I often do agree with him; I don't happen to on this particular occasion because he said you should arm and shame.

Mr. CHABOT. Right.

Secretary KERRY. Well, I don't think Assad is going to be shamed into any particular activity, nor the Russians or others. And there is arming taking place, but if you simply arm and say that your policy is to shame and you back off, deteriorating his capacity to deliver chemical weapons, and say, okay, that doesn't matter to us, you have opened Pandora's box for the use of chemical weapons. And all those people you arm will wind up being the victims of a chemical weapons attack.

So, with all due respect to Tom Friedman, who is most often correct, I think on this occasion it is absolutely vital that we send the message and deteriorate his capacity——

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. And hold him accountable.

Mr. CHABOT. Let me stop you if I can. I only have a short period of time.

Secretary KERRY. And we have given him impunity with respect to any future use.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Last Friday, all indications were that the President had made the decision to take military action. Then things obviously changed and he decided to consult with Congress. What made the President change his mind?

Secretary KERRY. Well, you would have to ask the President. I don't know completely. I think he——

Mr. CHABOT. I assume you have discussed this with him.

Secretary KERRY. We did discuss it, and what the President said was he felt very, very strongly that it was important for us to be in our strongest posture, that the United States needed to speak with one voice. He knew that you, in the consultations—I mean, you all asked for consultations. We began a process of consultation. We heard from you. And many of you said, we think it is really important to come to Congress.

I know Mike Rogers, in particular, in one conversation, talked about, you know, the need to not have the display of your—you know, you have a group of people you are opposed to, and you are sort of fighting the Congress and fighting with your allies and fighting with the U.N., try to unify it to the greatest degree you can. I think that was great common sense from Chairman Rogers. And the President decided, accordingly, to try to put America in the strongest position possible.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Chairman ROYCE. We need to go to Mr. Sires from New Jersey.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here this afternoon.

Mr. Secretary, one of the things that I read today which disturbed me a great deal is that, by the end of the year, we are going to have about 3 million refugees from the Syria conflict. And I am concerned about the impact that striking Syria will have on increasing the number of refugees. And I am concerned about how it is going to destabilize our friends in the region. Jordan is already overburdened. Turkey is already experiencing a burden.

Are we anticipating, are we making policies to alleviate what is coming, this avalanche of refugees? Because by the end of the year, they expect 3 million refugees, and that could be a bigger destabilizing factor in that region.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, this brings you squarely into a confrontation with this question that is fundamental to the choice you are going to make. There are risks of acting, but believe me, it is our judgment collectively and the President's that the greater risks are not acting.

You have 1.6 million to 2 million refugees today without our acting, and every prediction is that is going to get worse. I guarantee you that if we don't act and Assad is able to rain gas down on his people, you watch the numbers of refugees.

The greater capacity to prevent the numbers of refugees in this catastrophe that is building in the region is, frankly, to degrade his chemical capacity, help the opposition, and get to a point where you have a state of Syria that is still intact enough to actually have a negotiation for the Geneva I implementation of a transition government. That is the strategy, that is the goal.

And we have no chance of getting there if we back off and give him a message of impunity. We will have said to him, nobody cares, gas your people, you do what you need to stay in office, and we are backing off. That would be—I honestly find—I mean, that would be one of those moments in history that will live in infamy. And there are some of those moments: Munich; a ship off the coast of Florida that was sent back filled with Jews who then lost their lives to gas because we didn't receive them.

There are moments where you have to make a decision, and I think this is one of those moments.

Mr. SIRES. Are we making any new policies? I know that we are already contributing more money than anybody else to assist the refugees. Are we—

Secretary KERRY. The world needs to step up on this refugee issue. The United States proudly is providing more than anybody else, but this is unsustainable.

There are other discussions taking place now as to how we might respond to this ongoing crisis in nonmilitary terms. But I think that there are options available to us, but I don't want to get ahead of ourselves.

Mr. SIRES. General, this military action that we are taking, I assume that we are coordinating with our friends in the region?

General DEMPSEY. We are, Congressman.

Mr. SIRES. And do you anticipate them going along with us if it increases the need for them to participate?

General DEMPSEY. Well, we are reaching out to them. Some will support us directly and some indirectly with basing and overflight.

Mr. SIRES. Okay.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

We are going to go to Mr. Joe Wilson of South Carolina.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's longtime leadership to avoid the crisis that we face today.

And, General Dempsey, Secretary Hagel, Secretary Kerry, thank you for being here today.

We are here to learn more about a very serious issue, a United States strike on Syria. As a member of this subcommittee, as chairman of the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, as a 31-year veteran myself of the South Carolina National Guard and Army Reserve, but most particularly as the grateful father of four sons currently serving in the United States military, I am very concerned about what we are hearing today. I have many questions concerning the President's proposed strike and the risk to our military, American families, and our allies, particularly neighboring Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq.

Secretary Hagel, some have characterized the plans for the strike as leaked to the press as "a pinprick" that will not prevent President Assad from resuming his use of chemical weapons. How severely do you intend to degrade his capabilities? What will you do if he resumes chemical weapons? Where did these chemical weapons come from?

Secretary HAGEL. Congressman, thank you. Thank you for your service and for your sons' service.

I can assure you, on the first point you made, I can speak for General Dempsey and all of our military leaders that there is no higher purpose that we all have, nor more significant responsibility, than the protection of our men and women who serve in uniform. They are our highest priority.

As to your other questions, the President has said, he stated it again yesterday in a meeting in the Cabinet Room with the leaders of Congress—and I think Congressman Engel was there, as was Chairman Royce—this would not be a pinprick. Those were his words. This would be a significant strike that would, in fact, degrade his capability.

I think the three of us have noted, you have all noted and are much aware, that any action carries with it risk, any action with it carries with it consequence, but also does inaction, as Secretary Kerry has noted.

I can assure you, as Secretary of Defense, that the Department of Defense, our leaders, have spent days and days going over every option, every contingency, everything you talked about, and more—security of our forces, security of our Embassies, consulates, working with the State Department, everything that we needed to factor in if we took action. The President insisted on that. He wanted to see those plans—collateral damage, innocent people being hurt.

We think that the options that we have given him, first, would be effective, would, in fact, carry out the intent of what we have—

Mr. WILSON. Mr. Secretary, I don't mean to be rude, but time is flying. Where did the chemical weapons come from?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, there is no secret that the Assad regime has had chemical weapons, significant stockpiles of chemical weapons.

Mr. WILSON. From a particular country?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, the Russians supply them; others are supplying them with those chemical weapons. They make some themselves.

Mr. WILSON. And, Secretary Kerry, on April 25th, the White House legislative director, Miguel Rodriguez, wrote, "Our intelligence community does assess with varying degrees of confidence that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons."

With the President's red line, why was there no call for military response in April? Was it delayed to divert attention today from the Benghazi/IRS/NSA scandals, the failure of Obamacare enforcement, the tragedy of the White House-drafted sequestration, or the upcoming debt-limit vote? Again, why was there no call for military response 4 months ago when the President's red line was crossed?

Secretary KERRY. Well, the reason is very simple. The President made a decision to change his policy, but he didn't believe that the evidence was so overwhelming. It was significant, it was clear it had happened but on a scale that he felt merited the increase of assistance and the announcements that he made with respect to the type of aid that he would provide the opposition. So he did respond.

This is so egregious and now builds on the conclusions of our intel community as to the numbers of times, but such a clear case, so compelling and urgent with respect to the flagrancy of the abuse, that the President thinks that as a matter of conscience and as a matter of policy the best route to proceed is through the military action now.

Mr. WILSON. But in April it was very clear, chemical weapons—

Secretary KERRY. Yeah, but the President—

Mr. WILSON. Syria was identified, Mr. Secretary. Action should have been taken then.

Thank you.

Secretary KERRY. But the President didn't believe it was a compelling enough case to win the support of the American people as well as the world. This is.

The President did respond. He upgraded what we were doing very significantly. He came to Congress. As a matter of fact, many

of you know we had to struggle to get the Congress to agree to let him do the things that he wanted to do to upgrade that effort.

Mr. WILSON. But chemical—

Chairman ROYCE. Excuse me. Your time has expired. We need to go to Mr. Gerry Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you and Mr. Engel for holding this very important meeting.

And I thank our Secretaries of State and Defense and General Dempsey for being here.

Mr. Chairman, late last night, we delivered to all Members of Congress and I physically delivered a copy today of an alternative resolution, very narrowly drawn, that actually codifies what the President has said he wishes to accomplish and codifies no boots on the ground to try to make sure that we stay focused on the issue and a response to that issue and possibly provide the White House with a path to authorization here in the Congress. I commend it to both Secretaries and urge you to look at it. And, Mr. Chairman, I hope we will be able to mark it up.

When I looked at this issue, I used a filter with five aspects to it. And I commend it to my colleagues if they find it helpful. The first was, is the evidence strongly compelling and convincing, if not incontrovertible? Secondly, if so, what action is thereby warranted? Thirdly, what is the efficacy of the proposed action and what are the risks? Fourth, what is the efficacy and what are the risks of doing nothing?

And, finally, if the latter outweighs the former, how can Congress provide an authorization that narrowly is drawn to ensure no other involvement but that does two things: It enforces international law with respect to the ban on chemical weapons, and it deters future use of such weapons?

All of this is a matter of judgment. Everything I have heard from my colleagues on both sides of the aisle this week has been sincere and heartfelt. And I pray that we proceed on a nonpartisan basis to try to tackle this issue with respecting everybody's ultimate judgment, because it is a difficult issue and does not lend itself to facile answers.

I have come to the conclusion myself that the evidence is convincing and compelling. I also believe that the overhang of Iraq has many of us chained. Iraq was based on faulty and shoddy intelligence that was also misused to justify an a priori commitment to invade another country.

That is not the case here. We are not dealing with a President who is hungering to invade another country or put boots on the ground. In fact, quite obviously, his reluctance to do that is why we are here. We are also not dealing with prospective surmise about whether such weapons exist and whether or not he might use them. There is no doubt the weapons exist, the stockpiles are there, and there is no doubt he used them. So the question for us is, what do we do about it?

Mr. Secretary, let me ask one question. If we do nothing—and, Secretary Hagel, I invite you to answer, as well, keeping in mind we have a limited amount of time—if we do nothing, what is the likelihood, in your judgment, that Bashar al-Assad will use chemical weapons as a routine weapon to turn the tide of the civil war?

Secretary HAGEL. I think the likelihood is very high that he would use them again.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Secretary?

Secretary KERRY. Well, I agree completely. I might even put it at 100 percent. And, well, you should go check the intel on it; I think you will be convinced. But I would say probably 100 percent.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And, Mr. Secretary, if you are right that it is 100 percent, we will see these weapons now used routinely in the civil war to turn the tide if we do nothing. What is the probability that such weapons will also then get into the hands of Hezbollah and other elements supporting the Assad regime and, thus, perhaps proliferate the region against friend and foe alike?

Secretary KERRY. Well, I can't give you that probability. I just don't know what it is.

I do know this: That there are three principal supporters of Assad, and the rest of the world is in horror of what is happening. The three principal supporters are Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia. And if Iran and Hezbollah are allowed to both see him stay in power as well as do so with the use of chemical weapons, that is extraordinarily dangerous for Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, and our interests.

Chairman ROYCE. We need to go to the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, Mr. Michael McCaul from Texas.

Mr. MCCAUL. I thank the chairman.

I thank the Secretaries for being here. And, General Dempsey, thank you for being here, as well.

Next week, we commemorate the 12th anniversary of 9/11. It was al-Qaeda that hit the World Trade Center. It was al-Qaeda that hit the Pentagon down the street from here. Al-Qaeda is the enemy, and before 9/11 al-Qaeda was the enemy. As chairman of Homeland Security Committee, I want to make sure that never happens again. And I know you share that, as well.

I think what gives the Congress great pause and the American public great pause is there is no good outcome here. They don't see a good side versus a bad side. They see Assad as a bad actor who has used chemical weapons. There is no question about that. But then who is the other side? Who are the rebel forces? Who are they? I ask that in my briefings all the time.

And every time I get briefed on this, it gets worse and worse, because the majority now of these rebels forces—and I say majority now—are radical Islamists pouring in from all over the world to come to Syria for the fight. And my concern is any strike against this regime, as bad as it is, will empower these radical Islamists, these extremists.

And we have seen this movie before. We have seen Afghanistan. We have seen what happened in Egypt. We saw what happened in Libya. We saw what the Arab Spring has brought us, and it is not good. They filled the vacuum; they have filled a vacuum.

So my greatest concern when we look at Syria is who is going to fill the vacuum when the Assad regime falls, which we know that it will. Who is going to fill that vacuum? Are the rebel forces, the extremists, going to take over not only the government but these weapons? Because they are the ones most likely to use these weapons against Americans in the United States. And while, you

know, those images of children in Damascus are horrific, I do not want to see those images in the United States. And that is my grave concern. And this is a very dangerous step that we are taking, and I believe that we have to be very careful in how we proceed.

And so, with that and with all due respect, I think this is well-intentioned, but I have these concerns. And I want to hear from both Secretaries and the General as to whether you share these concerns and what you are going to do to stop that outcome. Because that is the absolute worst scenario, worst outcome that could happen.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, I was just trying to make sure—I apologize for interrupting. I think it would be helpful to you, as you were asking the question, because I am very concerned about the foundation of your question, the premise of it.

A woman by the name of Elizabeth Bagley, B-a-g-l-e-y, just wrote an article. She works with the Institute of War. She is fluent in Arabic and has spent an enormous amount of time studying the opposition, studying Syria. She just published this the other day, a very interesting article which I commend to you.

The fact is that sitting behind me, incidentally, is Ambassador Robert Ford. He is our Ambassador to Syria. He has spent an enormous amount of time with the opposition, working with them and helping us to understand this dynamic.

I just don't agree that a majority are al-Qaeda and the bad guys. That is not true. There are about 70,000 to 100,000 oppositionists. About somewhere maybe 15 to 25 percent might be in one group or another who are what we would deem to be bad guys. There are many different groups—al-Nusra, al-Shamra. There are different entities. And sometimes they are fighting each other, even now.

The general belief, there is a real moderate opposition that exists. General Idris is running the military arm of that. And our allies in this effort, our friends, from the Saudis, to the Emiratis to the Qataris and others, are now in a disciplined way funneling assistance through General Idris. And the moderate opposition is getting stronger as a result of that.

Mr. MCCAUL. And I have 40 seconds, but I—there are moderates there, but the briefings I have received, unless I have gotten different ones or inaccurate briefings, is that 50 percent and rising. These fighters coming globally are not coming in as moderates; they are coming in as jihadists. And that is my concern. And—

Secretary KERRY. There are jihadists—

Mr. MCCAUL [continuing]. I want to hear from the Secretary, also, and the General, as well.

Secretary HAGEL. Well, I agree with Secretary Kerry's analysis. But let me just remind us all, and you know this very well, Congressman, especially with your responsibilities as chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. This is an imperfect situation. There are no good options here. This is complicated. There is no clarity. Every point you made, the complications of the various terrorist groups which we have noted, are there. They are in play. This is a specifically difficult part of us trying to sort out who we would support, how we would support them. So I don't question that.

But I do think that Secretary Kerry's points are correct, that we are seeing some movement on the inside in the right direction.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Ted Deutch of Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Engel, thanks for calling this very important hearing.

And, Secretary Kerry, Secretary Hagel, General Dempsey, thanks for being here.

I believe we stand at a pivotal moment where Congress is either going to uphold its duty to protect our national security or we are going to retreat from our moral and strategic obligations. I believe our vote on what will have to be ultimately a very narrowly drawn resolution will determine whether Congress stands up for human rights or puts us on a dangerous path to isolation, whether Congress will increase American influence in the Middle East or allow our power to dramatically shrink.

I stand behind the President's request for limited and targeted strikes without U.S. troops on the ground against a regime that is guilty of heinous chemical weapons attacks on its own people.

And I know that this is a difficult decision. I know that some of my colleagues wish that we had done a lot more before now. And I know that my colleagues, other colleagues, wish to do nothing now. And I acknowledge the difficulty of being unable to predict Assad's next move. Secretary Hagel, you spoke to that.

This is a hard choice, and I don't think any of us relish making it. No use of force can ever be taken lightly. But inaction here, I believe, will dramatically harm our national security by emboldening the vile Syrian regime, its terrorist proxies, and its Iranian patron.

I think it is essential that the United States send an unequivocal message to Assad and to other brutal regimes around the world, especially Iran, that when the United States Congress, when the President, and when every civilized nation on Earth says that you cannot gas innocent children to death and you can't use chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction, that we mean it. I believe America's credibility is on the line in Syria.

We all saw the gut-wrenching images of children, of women, of families lying dead, cruelly and coldly murdered by Assad. This strike, if it is to occur, is about preventing such atrocities now and in the future, preventing the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria, and preventing those weapons from being used by terrorist groups like Hezbollah that threaten our allies and our citizens.

But American credibility is also on the line in Iran. Much like the red line set in Syria, the President has and this committee has, in strongly bipartisan fashion, set a clear red line that we will not allow Iran to obtain nuclear-weapons capability. If Congress votes down a limited authorization, then to Iran's leaders our red line against their development of nuclear weapons is meaningless. The sanctions that we passed unanimously out of this committee and 400 Members supported on the House floor will be rendered largely worthless because they are not backed up by a credible threat of force.

Secretary Kerry, I believe if we want to do everything in our power to solve the Iranian nuclear issue without military action,

then we must support this authorization. By authorizing use of force against Syria, America will make abundantly clear to the world, including Iran, that using chemical weapons or defying international law in pursuit of nuclear weapons will not be tolerated by this Nation.

So make no mistake, this resolution is about Syria and holding Assad accountable, but it is also about Iran and whether this Congress will make it more likely or less likely that that nation obtain nuclear weapons.

I haven't come to this decision lightly. I don't want to be in this position. None of us do. But we didn't put ourselves in this position. The President didn't put ourselves in this position. Bashar al-Assad put us in this position when he chose to gas his own people.

Now, Secretary Kerry, a lot of people have come up to me and said that they are disgusted by what they see, but the question they ask is, why does America always need to be the world's policeman? So I ask you, why should the U.S. lead this effort? And will we learn which are the 34 nations and organizations who have said they will support our action and how they are prepared to support it?

Secretary KERRY. Well, the United States of America is not being the world's policeman. The United States of America is joining with other countries in upholding an international standard that 184 nations have joined into.

Obviously, we have a greater capacity. We are blessed with an extraordinarily capable military that through the years the American people have invested in in order to protect our security interests. Our security interests are directly involved in what is happening in the Middle East. Our security interests are directly threatened with respect to Assad's use of these chemical weapons.

So we are building a support with other countries, among them the Arab League that announced its condemnation of this, specific countries that have talked in terms of acting, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, the Qataris, the Turks, and the French. Obviously, the British Government sought to, felt it should. They had a different vote, but that doesn't—in fact, that, I think, raises the stakes in terms of our holding ourselves accountable to a multilateral effort, to a multilateral standard, in which the United States is the most technologically advanced partner.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Ted Poe, the chairman of the Terrorism and Nonproliferation Subcommittee.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have heard a lot today about credibility of the United States. It seems to me that we have a credibility problem because our foreign policy in the Middle East is inconsistent. Our enemies really don't know what our foreign policy is, our friends don't know what it is, and I am not so sure Americans know what our foreign policy is in the Middle East. And we have seen it play out with different reasons, going into different countries, removing people from leadership and putting somebody else in, or being approving of it, tacitly approving of it.

I, like my friend Mr. McCaul from Austin, are concerned about the players on both sides. There is no pure side in this civil war. You have Hezbollah, a bunch of bad guys, on one side, and you

have the other terrorist groups on the other side, including al-Nusra and al-Sharam. I do believe that these are powerful groups on both sides. History will find out who ends up winning this civil war. And then you factor in the religious connotation in this civil war, and you really do have a real problem. We do have a real problem on our hands.

My concern is now, specifically, we want to do something to punish Mr. Bad Guy Assad. No question about it, he is a bad guy. He is wasting good air breathing. But we are just going to shoot a shell over the bow. We are not going to take him out, because we don't want to destabilize the civil war going on between two different sides, if I understand what that policy is.

So let's do that. Let's assume we do that. I am going to ask General Dempsey this question first. Assume we do that, whatever it is, to destabilize the weapons of mass destruction, get rid of them. I assume that is what we are trying to do, eliminate the weapons of mass destruction, even though, as Secretary Hagel said, they are getting those things from Russia, which are they going to give them more weapons? I don't know.

Assume we do that. Assad fights back. He doesn't just take it; he retaliates against us or lets Iran retaliate against Israel, all because we have come into this civil war. So they shoot back. Then what do we do? Once Americans are engaged now in an escalated specific strike, not by our choosing but by their choosing, do we escalate or do we not fight back?

And I know, General Dempsey, you have a tough situation on your hands. What do we do if they literally shoot back at Americans, or our friends the Israelis?

General DEMPSEY. First, just to clarify, this isn't about eliminating chemical weapons. That is not possible, given the number and the distribution of them. It is about convincing the Assad regime that it is unacceptable for them to use them, and that is the limit of this military operation.

We are postured for the possibility of retaliation, and I can assure you that our regional partners are, as well.

Mr. POE. Let me just ask that question with a little more clarification from you, if you can, General. I know you are in the military and you are to the point, and that is great. We are glad you are in charge.

Can you see that escalating, though, with U.S. military involvement in the region? Have you made a contingency plan for that happening, whatever their reaction is, the Syrians' reaction to us specifically? Have you made contingency plans for us being in an escalated military operation in the region?

General DEMPSEY. In the spirit of your compliment on my conciseness, yes.

Mr. POE. And do you see escalation as a possibility, U.S. military escalation in the region as a possibility?

General DEMPSEY. Well, I can never drive the risk to escalation to zero, but I think that the limited purpose, the partnerships we have in the region, the contributions that we will seek from others I think begins to limit that risk.

Mr. POE. One last question, since I am nearly out of time here.

General Dempsey, you mentioned earlier that you are concerned about removing Assad from power. Will you elaborate on that? And if so, what is your elaboration?

General DEMPSEY. Well, I still—again, separate from this conversation, which is about the limited purpose of deterring and degrading—I still am cautious about whether we should use U.S. military force in support of the opposition for the purpose of tipping the balance. I think there are other ways we can contribute to that through the development of a moderate opposition. But I remain cautious about taking the opposition's role here in the civil war.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Brian Higgins of New York.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

That Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons I think is clear, compelling, and irrefutable. However, I think that facts, experience, and history are all needed here, as well. The situation in Syria is that of a national civil war, an ethnic and sectarian conflict that America cannot solve and should not try to. This is not a fight for freedom and democracy; there is no democracy movement in Syria. There is no unifying vision or social contract, not a constitution or even a preamble of what Syria wants to become.

This is nothing more than a fight for control between two sectarian factions: An Alawite faction, or a militia, with airpower, supported by the Assad regime; and a mix of Islamic militias, estimated to be about 1,000, with no airpower. This is a conflict between a brutal and murderous dictator and an opposition whose best fighters are represented by al-Qaeda affiliates and Islamic extremists bent on creating an Islamist state in Syria. There are no good options, military options, for the United States in Syria.

The lesson in Syria, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, is that civil wars have to be fought internally and that political reconciliation cannot come from without. It has to come from within, and that can't be imposed by outside influences. We know that from our own history. While the Syrian civil war has caused 100,000 deaths in a country of 23 million, the American civil war caused 675,000 deaths from a young nation of 34 million people.

After spending \$2 trillion in Iraq and Afghanistan, representing \$40,000 in debt for every American family, and the loss of 6,668 American lives, and the physical and mental destruction of tens of thousands of more young Americans, Iraq is as violent today as any time in its history and Afghanistan is as poor and as corrupt as it has always been.

The American people are sick and tired of war. It is time to nation-build in America and invest in the growth of the American economy.

Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons on his own people, and that is morally reprehensible for certain. He should be condemned universally by the international community, and stiff sanctions should be imposed. He should be indicted as a war criminal in the international tribunal for his murderous deeds.

Unfortunately, the use of chemical weapons in this part of the world is not new. Saddam Hussein used them in the Iraq-Iran War between 1983 and 1988 and again against his own civilian population in northern Iraq in 1991. And, unfortunately, the stockpiling

and use of mustard gas and sarin, thousands of tons of chemical weapons, is all too common in the Middle East today, dating back decades.

The international support for the United States-led military strike in Syria, however surgical and limited in scope and time, consists of 2 countries, Turkey and France, out of 194 countries. The rest of the international community but for China and Russia says, "We support you, America, in your military strike so long as we don't have to do anything." The Arab League's response to this crisis is pathetically weak and, given their strategic interest, a joke.

So here we are, left with trying to topple the last minority regime in the Middle East and, for the third time in a decade, entering a national civil war in that part of the world essentially alone again.

Secretary Kerry, you spoke of the history of the world's response to the use of chemical weapons. Given that history, one would think that more countries would join the U.S. in participating—not supporting—in participating in a military strike against Syria. What gives?

Secretary KERRY. Well, Congressman, let me just begin, I will try to be very, very quick here. First of all, I regret to say it, I don't want to make this debate about what is happening in terms of regime change and the larger issues. But I just want to clarify. A fruit vendor who was tired of corruption and of being slapped around started the Arab Spring in Tunisia, and they threw out a dictator that had been there for a long period of time, the President. In Tahrir Square it was a bunch of young people with their modern technology, Googling each other and Facebooking, so forth, who organized a revolution. It wasn't the Muslim Brotherhood. Had nothing do with religion. It had to do with a generational revolution of people looking for their freedom, their opportunity, and their aspirations to be met.

Same thing happened in Syria. And in Syria, that opposition was met with violence by Assad. And so that is what has happened here. Now, the moderate opposition is in fact committed to democracy. It is committed to protection of all minority rights, to an inclusivity. They want an election in the future of Syria. So I don't want to have a debate about that because this is not about regime change. This is about the enforcement of the standard with respect to chemical weapons. That is what this is about.

Chairman ROYCE. We are going to go to Matt Salmon.

Secretary KERRY. The President is asking for limited authority to enforce that standard, not to deal with all those other issues.

Chairman ROYCE. Matt Salmon of Arizona, chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee.

Mr. SALMON. Thank you.

Secretary Kerry, let me first congratulate the President on bringing this matter to the Congress, as I believe he is constitutionally required to do. I, for one, am very happy that he has chosen to do this. He said just this morning that he didn't draw a red line, the world did, with the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty. Yet where is the rest of the world in the response? Why are we looking at a near go-it-alone military mission? You said in

your testimony that there are 34 countries who are with us. What degree are they with us and who are they specifically?

Secretary KERRY. I don't have the full list of them here, but I have listed a bunch of them. The Arab League countries have condemned this. A number of them have asked to be part of a military operation. The Turks, a NATO country, have condemned it, pinned it on Assad, asked to be part of an operation. The French have volunteered to be part of an operation. There are others who have volunteered. But, frankly, and I will let General, you know, Dempsey speak to this, we got more volunteers than we can use for this kind of an operation.

Now, in the next days those names, as they choose to, as this evidence comes out, will be made more public. But as I said to you, we have 53 countries have already condemned the use publicly, 37 have said so publicly. And there are I think it is a total of 34 countries or organizations have indicated that they are prepared to take action. Now, that is growing. There are more countries reviewing the evidence that we have shown. And as I said, over this time the President has purposefully taken to come to Congress he has asked me and the State Department to reach out to more countries and to build the kind of international support that this merits, and we will do so.

Mr. SALMON. Thank you. I would really appreciate it if we could get a list of the countries and what assets they are willing to commit.

Secretary KERRY. Delighted. We have it all broken down.

Mr. SALMON. Not now. We can get that later. I do have a question for General Dempsey.

General Dempsey, what are our goals in a military strike? The President said that the military attack would be limited in duration and scope and degrade the Assad regime's capacity to carry out future attacks on its own people. Do you believe that the use of surgical strikes will achieve the President's stated goal? And can you guarantee the American people that the Assad regime will be unable to launch any further chemical warfare attacks both at home or against their neighbors after the U.S. mission is complete? And in addition, do you believe that the region will be more stable after a U.S. attack or less stable?

General DEMPSEY. The mission given to me was to prepare options to attack to deter and degrade, and that would mean targets directly linked to the control of chemical weapons, but without exposing those chemical weapons to a loss of security. Secondly, the means of delivery. And third, those things that the regime uses, for example air defense, long-range missiles and rockets, in order to protect those chemical weapons or in some cases deliver them. So that target package is still being refined as I sit here with you.

As far as whether it will be effective, given the limited objectives I have received, the answer is yes, I believe we can make the military strike effective. In terms of what it will do to the region, that clearly will depend on the reaction of the Assad regime. But as I mentioned earlier, our partners and the United States military is postured to deter his retaliation.

Mr. SALMON. Finally, General Dempsey, as we have been discussing this over the last few weeks we have given pretty clear—

we telegraphed our message to Assad and his regime that we are planning to make an attack. Do you not assume that they might circle those wagons with civilians and that the possibility of civilian casualties could be very great?

General DEMPSEY. Well, the targeting requirements actually, as given to me by the President, require us to achieve a collateral damage estimate of low. And though they are in fact moving resources around, and in some cases placing prisoners and others in places that they believe we might target, at this point our intelligence is keeping up with that movement.

Chairman ROYCE. Karen Bass of California.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you, chairman and ranking member, for holding this hearing today, and also for our witnesses for coming. I have three questions. I would like to get out all three questions, and then ask whoever chooses to respond.

The first one, as I recall in Libya, the Arab League asked us to intervene. And if I am wrong, you know, correct me. But I wanted to know what was different this time. I know they have condemned the attacks, but why haven't they asked us to intervene?

And then second, what type of retaliation, if any, do you expect from Syria, from Iran, Hezbollah, or other affiliated parties if we move ahead with this strike? And what are we doing to prepare for any possible retaliation?

And then finally, as I understand, Putin made some comments today that he might be open to the idea of responding if it could be proven where the chemical weapons came from. And I was wondering if you thought that this provided an opportunity, one, how you might interpret his comments, but also is there still an opportunity for the international community to come together through multilateral bodies like the U.N. or NATO?

Those are my questions to whichever one of you chooses to answer them.

General DEMPSEY. Well, I learned in the military long ago never to volunteer, but I have just been tasked. I will answer the one that actually most applies to my particular expertise, and that is what kind of risk of retaliation. You know, there is both conventional risks. That would be if he chose to use some of his long-range rockets to attack his neighbors or some of our facilities. There is also asymmetric. You know, he could encourage some of the surrogates and proxies such as Lebanese Hezbollah to attack an Embassy. There are actions he could probably seek to achieve in cyber. And we are alert to all of the possibilities, and our mitigating strategy is in the way we have positioned ourselves in the region.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

I asked about the Arab League, and then the other one was about Putin.

Secretary KERRY. And the Arab League question?

Ms. BASS. The Arab League question was, as I recall during Libya, I believe that the Arab League asked us to intervene. And I wanted to know what the difference was with Syria. So they have condemned the attack, but they have not asked us to intervene, and why?

Secretary KERRY. The reason is that a couple of their members, a number of their members, three or four of them, are not in favor of it, so they didn't—they did a consensus statement. But individual countries are prepared to and are in favor of it, and I have named a number of them. But Lebanon, for obvious reasons, has some problems. Algeria, Iraq have some issues. Iraq for obvious reasons. So you can understand why people might be a little restrained.

Let me just share, because this has been a recurring theme here today, Australia, Foreign Minister Carr said that Australia supports the U.S. position on Syria and its right to take actions to enforce vital international norms. And he noted that Australia believes the United States has this right independent of any endorsement by the U.N. Security Council. Albania. The Albanian Ministry said, we are ready to politically support the U.S. and NATO in any action needed to be undertaken to put an end to the massacre of Syrian population and to support the Syrian opposition in building a free and democratic Syria. Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Ms. BASS. Before I run out of time, could you respond about Putin, you know, how you interpret what his comments were today?

Secretary KERRY. I would interpret his comments today as hopeful that perhaps at the G-20 he and the President will have a good conversation and there may be a road forward where Russia would consider not blocking action. But I would just quickly say to everybody here, Canada, Stephen Harper has said we should take action. Denmark, France, Poland, Turkey, all have suggested the United States should take action, they would be prepared to take action with us, and so forth. This is a building response, and I think other countries understand the moment.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. We are going to go now to Mr. Tom Marino of Pennsylvania.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, Chairman.

Secretary Hagel, if you could tell me or tell us, who are the bad guys? Or maybe put it this way, who are our allies? Who are the good guys over there in Syria?

Secretary HAGEL. You are referring to the opposition, I assume?

Mr. MARINO. But who are they?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, we have covered some of this ground. But again, you are looking at various groups that are part of the opposition. As Secretary Kerry noted, under General Idris there are groups who in fact have one motive and one objective, and that is a free and inclusive Syria.

Mr. MARINO. Do you implicitly trust these people?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, that is not my business to trust anybody.

Mr. MARINO. Well, certainly it has to be the business because you are making decisions to go into war and put American lives at risk. So it is a simple concept. You either trust or do not trust. And if you do not trust, we don't call these people our allies or support them.

Secretary HAGEL. Congressman, every nation, every individual, every group responds in their own self-interests. We are not unaware of all the different groups' self-interest.

Mr. MARINO. I think we are——

Secretary HAGEL. Our allies and friends——

Mr. MARINO. Excuse me, sir. With all due respect, I think we are aware, if we look back what happened in Libya, if we look what happened in the Middle East in the past, if we look at the Muslim Brotherhood, if we look at al-Qaeda, we have to take this into consideration. But obviously we do not know yet who the good guys are.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman——

Secretary HAGEL. Congressman, let me respond to that.

Mr. MARINO. Okay. Would you do it quickly, please?

Secretary HAGEL. The focus is not on good guys and bad guys, the focus is on a narrowly drafted resolution asking authorization from the Congress regarding chemical weapons.

Mr. MARINO. I wouldn't think good guys would be using the gas. I wouldn't think the good guys would be using the gas.

And, Secretary Kerry, if I may ask you, for argument's sake, as one prosecutor to another, I believe you are beyond a reasonable doubt assertion. I truly believe that. But this will not stop the butchering and the killing that takes place over there. So what is the purpose? What is the end game here? Where is the imminent danger to the United States?

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, you are absolutely correct that it will not stop the butchery. I wish it would. But what it will do is what it is intended to do. It is intended to assert the principle, which has been in place since 1925, that no one should use chemical weapons under any circumstances.

Mr. MARINO. Sir, I understand that. I understand that.

Secretary KERRY. All right. That is what this——

Mr. MARINO. But what is the reality of this? What is the reality of this?

Secretary KERRY. I am trying to tell you.

Mr. MARINO. We have seen this used in the past. You made the comment in 2002, when Bush wanted to go into Iraq, which I didn't agree with, and the President also made the statements when he, I think, was in the senate in the State, but at least was advancing his career, that we should not do this even though Saddam Hussein gassed his own people, the Kurds. Now what is the difference now, today, that you and the President are so intent on going into Syria because Assad has done this?

Secretary KERRY. Well, the gassing was not the pretext for that operation. But ultimately Saddam Hussein was held accountable for not just that crime, but all of his other crimes. And he hung. So the bottom line is he was held accountable.

Mr. MARINO. In hindsight, I can see in hindsight you stating that. But you weren't supporting that in 2002 like you are supporting it now. And I don't see the difference. My issue really gets to this. Who is going to pay for this? And what is it going to cost the United States taxpayers?

Secretary KERRY. Let me let Secretary Hagel address the cost issue for the military.

Mr. MARINO. Please. Please.

Secretary HAGEL. Congressman, we have looked at the different costs depending on the different options, depending on the decision

the President makes. We have given some ranges of this. It would be in the tens of millions of dollars, that kind of range.

Mr. MARINO. That answered my question. And I see my time is running out here. But believe this: Regardless of the minimization of intervention, an American military personnel will die. This I cannot accept. Soldiers coming home deformed and limbless and even in a body bag is not acceptable to me, and therefore I cannot and will not vote for this intervention in Syria. Thank you.

Secretary HAGEL. Well, this specifically notes that no boots would be on the ground, this resolution that is being drafted, I might remind the Congressman.

Mr. MARINO. I have heard that before.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go down to Mr. William Keating of Massachusetts.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all three of you gentlemen for your service to our country. And I want to thank all of you for sharing the information that you have thus far with Congress and the American public, as well as the world. And I think clearly that anyone looking at this evenly, that it has been a success in making clear the case there were chemical weapons used and the Assad government indeed used them. And I want to congratulate you and the President on those efforts.

So General Dempsey doesn't run out of time and has a few seconds to answer, we were going down a road that I just wanted to pursue, if I could. General, you raised concerns in the past about engaging militarily in the Syrian conflict. And obviously, you are here today to support a limited military action. But, you know, you did say, started to say in your remarks, there are military outcomes in supporting the opposition. But you qualified it saying that is not what we are doing here. But I am concerned that regardless of our stated intent in this area, others won't share that same view that it is not our intent.

So if you could, I am giving you plenty of time I hope, can you just expand upon what your concerns were, and maybe are, that you had in the past that you stated so we have a better understanding of what they are? And I am giving you enough time, too, to see what your views might be on how we can mitigate that or navigate around those concerns in the situation we are right now.

General DEMPSEY. Yeah. I want to separate support for the opposition from acting in a limited, focused way to deter and degrade the Assad regime from using chemical weapons. Because the former, the support for the opposition, does come with some risk of the slippery slope of not entirely understanding when that support ends and how much it has to grow over time, which is why I am mostly supportive of helping the opposition by their development, by their training and equipping, not by becoming their military arm. Okay.

Now, separate that from what we are here for today. In my view, militarily, the fact that the Assad regime has increased its use of chemicals over time to the point where initially it was a weapon intended to terrorize a small portion of a particular neighborhood, to send a message to the opposition, to where now in the most recent case it was used to literally attempt to clear a neighborhood,

they have reached the point now where Assad is using chemical weapons as just another military tool in his arsenal. That runs great risk for Syria, it runs risk in the region, it runs risk in the globe.

And I am able to, with some integrity, with a lot of integrity I hope, be able to come here before you today and make that distinction, that we should do something in our national interest based on the use of chemical weapons without committing to supporting the opposition to overthrow the regime.

Mr. KEATING. Was part of that slippery slope, General, was that part partly a concern about how other countries or how other factions could be taking our actions? Because even in a limited sense, we are helping the opposition because we are attacking the Assad government. So I mean in that respect was that any concern that you had prior to that and how do you mitigate that now?

General DEMPSEY. Well, we have always considered not only what effect our actions would have on our partners in the region, the Turks, the Jordanians, the Israelis, and even the Iraqis for that matter, with what in fact it would have potentially on our potential adversaries. And so, yeah, of course that has always been a concern, a concern and a consideration. But when something reaches the level where I think it has direct impact on our national security, then the overriding consideration is not what others think but what we think.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, General. Very quickly, I am ranking member on Europe, and Eurasia, and Emerging Threats there. NATO, there was a precedent set in 1999 where NATO did move without U.N. Security Council approval. Do you think there is hope for them moving not just individually as countries? Have you exhausted everything in terms of trying to get NATO support as an organization? I will ask either Secretary that question.

Secretary KERRY. I apologize, I was just reading a note from them. Could you repeat that?

Mr. KEATING. It was about NATO, the 1999 precedent, where they moved forward without that Security Council approval. Is there any hope in doing that organizationally going forward?

Secretary KERRY. I doubt it, but I can't tell you until I have the meeting that we are slated to have this weekend. I will get a better sense of that.

I would say to Congressman Marino with respect to the body bags and the specter that he drew, we had I think it was about a 28-day campaign, maybe 30-day campaign in Kosovo, Bosnia. There were over 30,000 sorties of our aircraft and so forth, none of which is contemplated here, none of which. And there were zero casualties. Zero.

Chairman ROYCE. We should go to Jeff Duncan of South Carolina at this time. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. DUNCAN. Well, thank you Mr. Chairman.

You know, I can't discuss the possibility of U.S. involvement in Syria's civil war without also talking about Benghazi. The administration has a serious credibility issue with the American people due to the unanswered questions surrounding the terrorist attack in Benghazi almost a year ago. When you factor in the IRS targeting of conservative groups, the AP and James Rosen issues, Fast and

Furious, and NSA spying programs, the bottom line is that there is the need for accountability and trust building from the administration. To paraphrase Friedrich Nietzsche, he said I am not upset over you not telling me the truth, I am upset because from now on I can't believe you. The administration has a credibility issue.

In my opinion, Secretaries Kerry and Hagel, Benghazi is germane to the discussions in Syria because, as you stated, Mr. Secretary, the world was and is watching for our response. But after almost a year of not bringing anyone to justice in Benghazi, they are watching our response. Mr. Kerry, your predecessor asked, what difference does it make now? Well, this is the difference, Mr. Secretary. These issues call into question the accountability of this administration, its commitment to the personnel on the ground, and the judgment that it uses when making these determinations. The American people deserve answers before we move forward talking about military involvement in Syria. Section IV of your testimony today said this is about accountability. Sure it is. The American people deserve answers about Benghazi before we move forward with military involvement in Syria's civil war.

This is a picture. You might not be able to see it from there, you might be able to see it on the screen, but this is the picture of Tyronne Woods given to me by his father, Charles Woods, a Navy SEAL. The Woods family deserves answers. He was killed in Benghazi. America deserves answers before we send another man or woman the caliber of Ty Woods into harm's way, especially in another country's civil war, especially when there is no clear indication that there is an imminent threat to the United States.

I don't question that chemical weapons were used in Syria. I have looked at the classified briefings. I do ask that, if so, where are the other signatory countries of the Chemical Weapons Convention as the U.S. beats the drums of war against this regime in Syria?

I have spoken to hundreds of constituents. This represents about 300 emails that my office has gotten. And not a one, not a one member in my district in South Carolina or the emails of people that have contacted my office say go to Syria and fight this regime. To a letter they say, no, do not go into Syria, don't get involved in their civil war. I spoke to eighth graders, about 150 eighth graders yesterday. They get it. They get it that we shouldn't be drug into someone else's civil war where there are no good guys. There are no good guys to get behind here. And I can only envision an escalation of this current conflict.

The same administration that was seemingly so quick to involve the U.S. in Syria now was reluctant to use the same resources at its disposal to attempt to rescue the four brave Americans that fought for their lives in Benghazi.

Mr. Kerry, you have never been one that has advocated for anything other than caution when involving U.S. forces in past conflicts. The same is true for the President and the Vice President. Is the power of the executive branch so intoxicating that you would abandon past caution in favor for pulling the trigger on a military response so quickly?

The reason that I say Benghazi is germane to our discussions on Syria is this. Secretary Kerry, have there been any efforts on the

part of the United States, directly or indirectly, to provide weapons to the Syrian rebels? And that would also include facilitating the transfer of weapons from Libyan rebels to the Syrian rebels.

Secretary KERRY. Have there been efforts to?

Mr. DUNCAN. To put weapons in the hands of Syrian rebels and also transfer weapons from Libya to Syria.

Secretary KERRY. Well, let me begin, Congressman, by challenging your proposition that I have never done anything except advocate caution, because I volunteered to fight for my country. And that wasn't a cautious thing to do when I did it. Secondly, when I was in the Senate——

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Secretary, with all due respect, my time——

Secretary KERRY. I am going to finish, Congressman. I am going to finish. When I was in the United States Senate I supported military action in any number of occasions, including Grenada, Panama, I can run a list of them. And I am not going to sit here and be told by you that I don't have a sense of what the judgment is with respect to this. We are talking about people being killed by gas and you want to go talk about Benghazi and Fast and Furious.

Mr. DUNCAN. Absolutely I want to talk about Benghazi because four Americans lost their lives. I have sympathy for the people in Syria, and I do think there should be a worldwide response. But we should act cautiously.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, we are acting cautiously. We are acting so cautiously that the President of the United States was accused of not acting because he wanted to have sufficient evidence and he wanted to build the case properly.

Mr. MARINO. It has been 15 days.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to——

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, Congressman. Let me finish.

Mr. Chairman, point of privilege here. This is important. I think this is important. I think it is important whether or not we are going into Syria in a way that the Congressman describes, which I think most people in America don't want us to do. We don't want to do that. That is why the President has said no boots on the ground. This is not about getting into Syria's civil war. This is about enforcing the principle that people shouldn't be allowed to gas their citizens with impunity. And if we don't vote to do this Assad will interpret from you that he is free to go and do this any day he wants to. That is what this is about, not getting involved in Syria's civil war.

So let's draw the proper distinction here, Congressman. We don't deserve to drag this into yet another Benghazi discussion when the real issue here is whether or not the Congress is going to stand up for international norms with respect to dictators that have only been broken twice until Assad—Hitler and Saddam Hussein. And if we give license to somebody to continue that, shame on us.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go now to Mr. David Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the ranking member for convening this hearing. And I want to begin by thanking our three witnesses not only for being here today, but for your extraordinary service to our country.

I want to acknowledge and thank the President for his consultation. I have had the opportunity to participate in a classified briefing on Sunday, review some documents, a briefing on the telephone on Monday with Secretaries Kerry, Hagel, Jim Clapper, and others, Ambassador Rice. I really thank the President for this ongoing consultation and sharing of information.

This is, I think, a very difficult question. And there are, as Secretary Hagel said, no good answers. The use of chemical weapons was horrific. I think there is ample evidence that the Assad regime is responsible for that and should be held accountable. And my question really is, as I talk to constituents in my district who react the same way, this war weariness and a recognition of all of the enormous risks associated with military intervention, both in proping up the wrong opposition and loss of life and being deeply engaged in a civil war and the spiraling of that, they all wonder is there a set of actions we could take which would evidence strong condemnation, isolate Assad, and also vindicate our deep commitment to a set of international institutions and organizations? So things like making China and Russia act in the Security Council on a public stage to veto a resolution. Attempt to seek an indictment of Assad for war crimes. Isolate Syria in ways through sanctions and other kinds of international actions where we might build a broad coalition, strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons, isolate Syria, and help build the sort of international voice, and do it in a way, frankly, that would be more consistent with our values, with the idea of working together with other nations and using international organizations.

So I would like to know was there a discussion about a set of such options that might be effective without the risks that are associated with military action? Were they considered and rejected? Or is it something we could put together that would be a strong, forceful statement and set of actions that would hurt Assad, deter the likely use of chemical weapons again, but without any of the dangers?

And then second question quickly is, Mr. Secretary, Secretary Kerry, you mentioned that America and her allies have ample ways to make Assad regret that decision without going to war. I think we would love to hear more about what those things are because I think one of our concerns or many concerns is what happens after a military attack.

But I am really interested in that first question from all of you as to whether or not we might think hard about other ways to do this that will invite the kind of condemnation that is appropriate.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, a very good question. Let me just say to you that we wish, believe me, we wish that the international institution that is there for this kind of response was able to respond, and that is the U.N. and the U.N. Security Council. As recently as a few weeks ago, when this event took place, our representatives at the U.N. attempted, along with other allies, to put a resolution in front of the Security Council that would have simply condemned the event, not assigning any blame at all, just condemned the use of action, and the Russians said no. They blocked it. So that is what has set us into this path of believing that we

have to act in a way that has an effect at deterring Assad from the use of these weapons.

Now, even if the U.N. did pass something, even if you had some sanction, if it isn't meaningful in a way that is going to deter the action, and no one has yet contrived of some, you know, piece of paper or terminology that is going to change this man's calculation with respect to what he is fighting for. So I think the judgment has been made that the only way to have an impact, the only way you are going to hold him accountable now is to make it clear to him that this will in fact detract from his ability to abuse his people and to use force to stay in power.

Mr. CICILLINE. I know Secretary Hagel has—

Secretary HAGEL. Well, I think what the Secretary said is exactly right. I would add two things. There are a number of tracks that we are on right now to accomplish what you are talking about. Secretary Kerry's diplomatic track, which has been ongoing and intense. Our reaching out to our allies all over the world. I was in Asia last week with 15 defense ministers from all over Asia-Pacific, discussing this, meeting with leaders of countries in those areas. Our NATO allies. All three of us have been talking to our counterparts from countries all over the world. What the White House is doing. What the President is doing. So working through institutions. We are still involved with the United Nations. So those tracks are being run in addition to what we are talking about here.

One exact point on the purpose of this hearing. General Dempsey said this morning at the Senate Armed Services Committee, when asked about the violation of the chemical weapons norm, a 100-year-old norm, well, is it that important? Is it that big a deal? One of the points that General Dempsey made, which is exactly right, and we start here, this is a threat to our interests, to our forces, to our country, allowing a tyrant to continue to get away with the use of chemical weapons, that is a real threat against us.

Chairman ROYCE. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, gentlemen, thank you. I know you have had a couple of very long weeks. I am about to support this, but I do want to say at the very beginning my disapproval of the President's policies in the Middle East. And I believe that part of the reason we are having difficulty rallying an international coalition is because they don't see the United States having led on this until recently.

But that said, as a veteran of the military, as a current-serving military pilot in the Air National Guard, I also am war weary, as many Americans are war weary. But I want to remind Americans what one of my favorite Presidents, Ronald Reagan, said, if we want to avoid war. He said war begins when governments believe that the price of aggression is cheap. And I think that is a situation we find ourselves in, in Syria now. In fact, in listening to some of my colleagues, it has been amazing to me that we are seeming to paralyze ourselves into inaction, running through every potential scenario that could occur in this. And it makes me wonder, God help us if we become a country that can't do the right thing because we paralyze ourselves to inaction.

What I have got here is a picture that I think everybody needs to see. This is a picture of Syrian children, many of which, the Sec-

retary said earlier, about 400-some died in at least just this one chemical gas attack. And if we don't do anything about this, you can ensure that maybe even the kids in this picture, or definitely other kids, will die from the same attack.

I want to very quickly read to you the effects of sarin gas, and I want you to look at these children and understand that children have gone through this. The mild effects of sarin exposure is runny nose, watery, burning eyes, small pupils, eye pain, blurred vision, drooling and excessive sweating, cough, chest tightness, rapid breathing, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, increased urination, confusion, drowsiness, weakness, headache, slow or fast heart rate, low or high blood pressure. Exposure to large doses of sarin, like we saw in Syria, loss of consciousness, convulsions, paralysis, respiratory failure, which is a polite way of saying you suffocate to death while you are aware that you are suffocating to death.

What we are talking about is a discussion of what the international community and the United States of America in the goodness of our heart has determined is the right thing in an area that we can affect. Can we ban all artillery shells? We can't. Can we ban all war? We can't. But if we can stand up and say that chemical weapons have no place in this world and we can do something about it, God help us if we don't.

And I would remind folks, and I will ask you all to comment on this eventually, from 1991 to 2002 or 2003, we maintained two no-fly zones over Iraq under bipartisan administrations because of our disdain for chemical weapons. And most people would have agreed that what we did over northern and southern Iraq was the right thing to do because Saddam Hussein gassed his own residents.

This is not the first time America has put down a red line on chemical weapons. I have heard people say that this is the President's red line, it is not the red line of the United States of America, and you just have to look at history and know that it is. And I am also reminded of what President Clinton said when he was asked what his one regret was for his time in presidency. He said, my one regret was inaction in Rwanda. And I wonder, in 20, 10, 50 years what are we going to say if we did nothing about the gassing of thousands of people in Syria.

Now, I just have a couple of questions. I have heard some people say, and it has really bothered me, they say that if we go in and we strike Assad and make him pay for the use of chemical weapons, more than any benefit he gains, that we are acting as "al-Qaeda's Air Force." And I believe that is a cheap line by some people to garner headlines and not a serious discussion of what is going on in Syria. So, Mr. Secretary Kerry, if you will start, what is your thought on the comment of the cheap line of al-Qaeda's Air Force in dealing with the opposition and in punishing an evil man for using evil weapons?

Secretary KERRY. Well, Congressman, your comments have been very eloquent and I think very, very important to this discussion. And I am confident I join the General and Secretary Hagel in thanking you for your service, willing to serve both in the Guard as well as a pilot but also here.

The intent of the President could not be more clear. And the impact if we effect, if Congress will pass this and we can carry out this action, the impact will be not to help al-Qaeda. In fact, it won't help al-Qaeda. It will further expose al-Qaeda. But it will hold a dictator accountable to this critical standard. You just reiterated it, and I said it in my opening testimony, this is not just about folks in Syria, my friends. American troops benefit from this standard being upheld. And through all of our wars since 1925 we have managed to see it upheld against when we have been involved.

And the fact is that the absence of our willingness to uphold this standard will do several things that are directly against our interests. Number one, completely undermine America's validity, America's credibility, America's word in the region and elsewhere. It will embolden North Korea and embolden Iran with respect to activities that will directly threaten the United States and our allies. It will importantly increase the number of terrorists that we are already concerned about because it will force people who want to take on Assad to go to the least common denominator of efficiency and expediency, and that will be to arm the worst people who will try to get the job done.

And so I would just urge everybody to listen carefully to Congressman Kinzinger, but to really evaluate this just on a fundamental basis of common sense and human behavior. In the absence of doing this, there will be a grant of impunity to Bashar al-Assad for the use of these weapons.

Chairman ROYCE. Alan Grayson from Florida.

Mr. GRAYSON. Thank you.

General Dempsey, do Syria and Hezbollah have the means to launch a counterattack against U.S. vessels in the Mediterranean, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, and Israel?

General DEMPSEY. Our maritime assets are positioned such that there are no capabilities that can threaten them. Embassies of course are a fixed resource and are always subject to terrorist attack. That remains true today as it has for the last 10 years. And we have taken steps to mitigate that risk.

Mr. GRAYSON. And Israel?

General DEMPSEY. Israel, you may be aware, is actually anticipating some action, gone to a state of high alert, called reserves up, taken a lot of measures. And by the way, we partner with Israel very closely on the defense of Israel.

Mr. GRAYSON. Would you say that a counterattack is more likely than not?

General DEMPSEY. No, I don't think I can say that. But, you know, without signaling the Syrian regime in some way, I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't come to that conclusion.

Mr. GRAYSON. Secretary Kerry, have members of the Syrian opposition called for such an attack? And if so, whom?

Secretary KERRY. Not specifically that I know of. They support it apparently, but they have not advocated to me. I have had conversations with the president of the opposition and there was no pleading or urging to do this.

Mr. GRAYSON. In fact, haven't members of the Syrian opposition said they don't want an attack? Isn't that true?

Secretary KERRY. No, I have not heard that.

Mr. GRAYSON. You haven't seen the public reports to that effect?

Secretary KERRY. No.

Mr. GRAYSON. All right. Secretary Kerry, there are 189 signers of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria does not happen to be one of them. How many of those signatories have pledged to participate in the military intervention in Syria? And what exactly has each one pledged to do?

Secretary KERRY. There are at least 10 countries that have pledged to participate. We have actually not sought more for participation. We have sought people for support. And there are many more, obviously, that support. But I think I should let the General speak to the question. You know, I said earlier there really is a limit, for this kind of an operation, as to how many you want to participate. You want support. But just physically, the management of it, the technical capacity and other issues are critical.

And, General, perhaps you want to say something.

General DEMPSEY. Actually, Congressman, I apologize, I was writing down your first question. What was the question about partners?

Mr. GRAYSON. Of the 189 signatories to the Chemical Weapons Convention how many of them have pledged to participate in a military attack on Syria and what have they pledged to do?

General DEMPSEY. Well, I don't have the final answer to that question. Commander USCENTCOM is actually militarily conducting most of the outreach. And we have, you know, we have agreement to assist in many different ways, some of which wouldn't be appropriate to speak about in an unclassified setting.

Mr. GRAYSON. Secretary Hagel, will the military action in Syria, if it does take place, require a supplemental appropriation? And if you think not, then will you commit to that now?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, it depends on the option that the President would select. I have said that we will work with the Congress on whatever the cost of that is. Thank you.

Mr. GRAYSON. Secretary Hagel, there has been a report in the media that the administration has mischaracterized post-attack Syrian military communications and that these communications actually expressed surprise about the attack. This is a very serious charge. Can you please release the original transcripts so that the American people can make their own judgment about that important issue?

Secretary HAGEL. What transcripts are you referring to?

Mr. GRAYSON. The transcripts that are reported that took place after the attack in which the government has suggested that they confirmed the existence of an attack, but actually it has been reported that Syrian commanders expressed surprise about the attack having taken place, not confirmed it.

Secretary HAGEL. Well, that is probably classified, Congressman. I would have to go back and review exactly what you are referring to.

Mr. GRAYSON. Well, you will agree that it is important that the administration not mislead the public in any way about these reports, won't you?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, of course. But I am not aware of the administration misleading the American public on this issue or any other issue.

Mr. GRAYSON. Will you agree that the only way to put that matter to rest is to release the original reports in some redacted form?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, I am not going to agree to anything until I see it, until I understand better what it is. But most likely it is classified.

Mr. GRAYSON. I understand that. I am asking will you declassify it for this purpose?

Secretary HAGEL. I just gave you my answer. I have no idea what exactly you are talking about. I would have to go back and look at it. I would have to confer with others, our Intelligence Community. That is all I can tell you now. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Tom Cotton of Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kerry, Mr. Hagel, General Dempsey, thank you for your time and service, most importantly, in uniform, Mr. Kerry, Mr. Hagel as young men, General Dempsey as a young man and now as a more seasoned man as well.

I have grown weary for several months, not weary of war, because I know, as each of you know, that war is sometimes the price that a free society must pay to defend our freedom and to protect our interests abroad. I have grown weary of the President's war weariness. I have called for months for action in Syria. I feel that action should have been taken years ago. I am deeply worried that our core national security interests are at stake in Syria.

Mr. Kerry, you said that the President does not bluff. I fear that both our enemies and our allies do not believe that statement. For some time now we have let Iran violate numerous United Nations resolutions. In Syria, we have not acted previously on uses of chemical weapons. And I do believe the world is watching. And the day the United States does not act is not just a day that Bashar al-Assad knows it is open season for chemical weapons, but also the day Kim Jong Un knows that, and most ominously, the day that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, spins his centrifuges into overdrive, which starts the clock ticking to the less than 2-year moment when those nuclear warheads on intercontinental missiles could hit our constituents here in the United States.

I agree with what my colleague Adam Kinzinger has said, that we have a vital interest in maintaining the international taboo against chemical weapons. All of you, like me, have been in training, I suspect, where you have been exposed to gas, and you know that no one benefits from that taboo more than do American troops. And I am also deeply worried that our inaction is destabilizing the Middle East, in particular our allies in Israel and Jordan, as well as Turkey, and emboldening Iran, one of our most implacable enemies, as they send thousands of troops to fight in Syria, along with Hezbollah, its terrorist proxy from Lebanon.

So that is why, miracle of miracles, I am in support of the President's call for action in Syria. I am urging my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to support this action as well. However, the President's stated policy was not just a red line against chemical weapons, which, as Mr. Sherman said, occurred without any objec-

tion from Members of Congress, and occurred before he was re-elected by the American people, it was also a stated policy of regime change.

So I would like to ask you, what is the President planning that could lead not just to punishment for this use of chemical weapons, but also an ultimate victory in Syria, which is a change in the nature of the regime so they will not use chemical weapons again and so that a pro-Western, moderate, native Syrian Government can take its place?

Secretary KERRY. Well, Congressman, thank you for a very clear and compelling statement, and thank you for the support for the President's initiative for the interests of the country.

With respect to the longer term, you are absolutely correct. But I want to separate here because it is very important in terms of what the President is asking the Congress for. Yes, the President's policy is that Assad must go and there should be a regime change. And the President is committed to additional efforts in support of the opposition, together with friends and allies in the region, in a coordinated way in order to achieve that, with the understanding that the ultimate transition will come and can come through a negotiated settlement, a political resolution, not a military. He doesn't believe—we don't believe—there is a military solution.

But this action, because nobody should be confused, Americans should not be confused, and I said earlier, you know, this is not an effort to take over Syria's civil war, it is an effort to uphold this standard. And the action the President is asking the Congress to approve is not—is a singular military action to uphold that standard with respect to chemical weapons.

On a separate track is the political track, which the President is seeking support for through appropriate channels here in Congress, which is in effect now, to help the opposition in order to ultimately see Assad leave. But we don't want to confuse the two and the context. Is there a downstream collateral benefit to what will happen in terms of the enforcement of the chemical weapons effort? The answer is yes, it will degrade his military capacity. It will for sure have downstream impact. But that is not the primary calculation of what brings us here, and nobody should confuse the two in this effort. What I would like to do, Congressman, is really in classified session we should have the discussion about the other things the President would like to see us do to support the opposition.

Mr. COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Juan Vargas of California.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Secretaries, for being here, and General. First of all, I would like to say before I ask an embarrassing question, I have the greatest respect for all of you. I think Secretary of State Kerry, I think I first heard of you from Dan Berrigan back in 1985 when I was in the Jesuits, I was at Jesuit House, and he had great respect for you because of your activities after Vietnam. And I know, Secretary Hagel, that you were so reluctant on going to war that you almost weren't approved by the Senate. In fact, I think you were the only Secretary ever to be filibustered. So I know you are not anxiously running to war. And the President of course ran

on not getting us into war. And I am certainly someone who is very reluctant to get into any kind of war like this.

On Saturday, however, I had the opportunity to speak to a small group of veterans in my district in San Diego before I flew here for the classified briefing on Sunday, and they asked a question, and I told them I would ask. I first told them I wouldn't, but then they convinced me it was a good question. And that is that one of them has a son in the military today, and he believes that last time we went running off to war that the facts that we were given were lies or misleading. And what he wanted is just one thing. And I told him that all I had read, and certainly now all that I have read does lead me to believe that chemical weapons were used, and that children were gassed, and because of that we do have to act. But he wanted you to promise that the facts that you have given us are true to the best of your ability, that you are not lying, that you are not holding anything back, that what we have seen and what I have read—and I have read everything that they have given to us, I have been back twice now to make sure that I have read everything—I want to make sure that you promise us that you are telling the truth.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, I am proud and perfectly willing to tell you that everything that I have said is the truth, and based on the information as it has been presented to me, and as I have, based on my own experience in war, which I resolved to do if I ever was in a position to make any choices in the future, fully vetted, and I am comfortable with it. And I wouldn't possibly make this recommendation if I weren't comfortable with it.

I believe we have vetted this, we have double-checked it, we have asked the intel people to rescrub. We have even had a separate team created that had independent from the original to totally vet, check all the analysis, find out if it could have been an opposition or anything else. And in every case I would say for myself, and everybody that we have sat around the table with, there is a comfort level with this that is rare in this kind of situation. I wouldn't have said you could prove this case beyond a reasonable doubt if I didn't believe it.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you.

Secretary Hagel? Again, I apologize for the insulting question, but I think it has to be asked.

Secretary HAGEL. No, I think it is a very important question. We ought to ask more questions like that.

I don't know how I would improve on my former Senate colleague's question and answer back to you. I feel exactly the same way. I know that the three of us wouldn't be sitting here today saying the things we are saying if we didn't absolutely believe it. We have all three been through too much and our experiences guide us. Thank you.

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Chairman, I still have a lot of time left, but that was my only question. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Thank you.

We are going to go now to Mr. George Holding of South Carolina.

Mr. HOLDING. North Carolina, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. North Carolina, of course.

Mr. HOLDING. That is all right, it is all right. We still like South Carolina.

General Dempsey, thank you very much for your service. I appreciate the fact that we have a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that also has a master's degree in literature, Irish literature at that. The objectives of this military action that have been stated is, you know, to hold accountable, degrade ability, and deter future action, and, you know, the associated targeting with those objectives. Would this military action, militarily speaking from your perspective, constitute war?

General DEMPSEY. Well, as you know, Congressman, the decision on whether something rises to the level of war is actually one that is made collaboratively between the Commander in Chief and the Congress of the United States. I think militarily it is hard—it would be hard for me to say that this is other than an act of war. But the problem with that characterization is that war has this image of being a campaign over an extended, protracted period of time until someone plants a flag or someone surrenders. And I want to make it clear that is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about something very limited to address the specific issue of the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. HOLDING. If we take these actions, you know, trying to achieve the objectives that you stated and the Syrians punch back, you know, that escalation, you know, I am sure we can degrade their ability to punch back, I am sure that you have planned for the contingencies of them punching back, but, you know, there is always the chance that they can punch back and it can hurt. I think about the British in the Falklands, and they had tremendous, overpowering strength, and all of a sudden they found that, you know, there were some weaknesses there, there was a hole in defenses, and they lost a capital ship. And that could happen to us. If the Syrians punch back and are successful, would that be closer to a definition of war?

General DEMPSEY. Well, I am not sure that their reaction to our action and our reaction to that—you know, I mean this gets into a cycle. And again, it is not the chairman of the Joint Chiefs that defines or declares war. But if you are asking me are we prepared for a retaliation, we are as well prepared as we possibly could be.

Mr. HOLDING. So certainly we are prepared for any retaliation. And if there was retaliation, we would have to answer that immediately.

General DEMPSEY. You know, Congressman, I wouldn't make that conclusion. I mean, you know, I think there is no automaticity to anything in conflict, at least from my perspective. I think, you know, I think that we would certainly have the ability to control our response on our terms. So I wouldn't conclude that this resolution starts a process that you or the President lose control of.

Mr. HOLDING. Militarily speaking, is Russia still a superpower?

General DEMPSEY. I think the answer to that question is when you look at the instruments of power—look at ourselves. So it is a combination of military, diplomatic, and economic power that defines us as a “superpower.” I think that Russia still possesses elements that would qualify them to join the club of superpowers. They still have an incredible strategic arsenal. But conventionally

I wouldn't put them in that class. And so I think there are parts of their apparatus that rise to that level.

Mr. HOLDING. Obviously, I mean we all know that Syria and Russia are close allies, and Syria is Russia's last ally in the Middle East. Syria has the only Russian military base outside of Russia. If Russia decided to strike at us in that theater what are the top three options that they would have to strike us in retaliation for us striking their closest ally?

General DEMPSEY. You know, Congressman, I am going to suggest that it wouldn't be helpful in this setting to have a discussion about that kind of hypothetical. But I do have some views about it that I could share in a classified environment.

Mr. HOLDING. But we can certainly say that Russia would have options to strike us in that theater in retaliation for us striking their ally.

General DEMPSEY. Russia has capabilities that range from the asymmetric, including cyber, all the way up through strategic nuclear weapons. And again, it wouldn't be helpful in this setting to speculate about that.

Mr. HOLDING. Yes, sir. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. Brad Schneider of Illinois.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. And I want to thank you all again, first, of course, for the service to our country, but also for the time you have spent with us today, as well as Ambassador Ford, for the time you spent with us earlier in the year. This is without a doubt the biggest decision, one of the biggest decisions we can possibly make, and one I think we all take very seriously. It is why I came Sunday for the classified briefing. I have read the classified report. I have listened in on the teleconference we had on Monday, and I am grateful to have the time with you here.

I also recognize the angst of my constituents of the country, as there is a worry and a legitimate concern. But, Secretary Kerry, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you said, if we do nothing, the likelihood of Assad using chemical weapons again is, I will say, approaching 100 percent. Is that fair?

Secretary KERRY. Fair.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And, with that, I want to turn—I am sorry—to General Dempsey, because you said, in escalation, you can't get the risk of escalation down to zero. But I wonder if there is a risk of escalation if we do nothing.

General DEMPSEY. There is absolutely a risk of escalation in the use of chemical weapons if we do nothing.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And if that approaches 100 percent, if we do stand down now, is there a likelihood that we are back at this same question again a month or 6 months from now at a higher level with a greater risk?

Secretary KERRY. I believe so.

Secretary HAGEL. I think so.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. So, I guess, as I evaluate the decision we have to make, you know, the first thing I wanted to see was the evidence. And I think, without a doubt, as you have said, beyond any reasonable doubt, the Assad regime has planned, perpetrated, and even tried to cover up this massive use of chemical weapons, weapons of mass destruction.

One of my questions was a question of national interest. And, General Dempsey, you have said, without a doubt, for our soldiers who are here at home and our interests around the world, this is a threat to our national interests. Is that fair, as we go through the decision process?

General DEMPSEY. It is, because of the essentially establishing, kind of, it is an overused phrase, but a new norm. And I haven't lived in a world where, militarily, chemical weapons were routinely used, and I don't want to live in that world.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. From an international standpoint, I guess I come to, if we have the interest, in our national interest, the authority—clearly, I reviewed the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United Nations is the authority here. But, Secretary Kerry, you said the United Nations is not available to us. If it was, would we be on a different strategy, or is this all that is left to us?

Secretary KERRY. If the Russians were to join in and be willing to pass this, with the Chinese, I guarantee the President would want to see it passed.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. All right. Thank you.

Secretary KERRY. But could I just also—Congressman Holding left a question on the table, and I want to make sure it is not hanging out there.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Please.

Secretary KERRY. Foreign Minister Lavrov of Russia has made it clear, quote, I mean, pretty much quote, paraphrased, Russia does not intend to fight a war over Syria. And I have had personal conversations with President Putin and with the Foreign Minister that have indicated that Syria doesn't rise to that level of potential conflict.

And so I just don't—you know, their ships are kind of staying out of the way. They are not threatening that. And I don't think that would be what would happen here.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. All right. Thank you.

So if the U.N. is not available to us, the international community is rising up—and I want to thank you for reaching out to them and bringing in the coalition. If we don't lead, is there anyone else who will lead to hold the Assad regime accountable?

Secretary KERRY. Well, it is conceivable that the French, if others were to join them, might decide and others in the region might decide. But, you know, we are not putting that to the test because we don't believe that that is appropriate.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Okay.

As we look forward—and Mr. Cicilline touched on this, the other options on the table. You have evaluated, you have seen where we are. This, as I said, is one of the biggest decisions we are going to make.

Can you state definitively that the strategy laid out that you are considering will achieve the goals we have, to deter and diminish the ability of the Assad regime to use chemical weapons going forward?

General DEMPSEY. Yeah, militarily, I can state that we can achieve the goal of deterring and degrading. Take note that I didn't say we can prevent. I mean, that is the challenge here. We are trying to change the calculus of the regime.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I understand. And what I believe is that for us to prevent would require us isolating, identifying, and putting boots on the ground, which I think uniformly we have said we stand against.

All right. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman ROYCE. We will go to Mr. Randy Weber of Texas.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dempsey, these are for you. In your remarks that you submitted to this committee, there was five options you laid out: Advising and assisting the opposition; conducting limited standoff strikes; establishing a no-fly zone; establishing buffer zones; and, number five, control chemical weapons.

Now, I have been through that and I have studied it, and I am going to go back through that. Training, advising, and assisting the opposition costs several hundred troops to several thousand, in your words, \$500 million annually. The risks were that extremists would gain access to additional capabilities. Do you remember writing that?

General DEMPSEY. I do.

Mr. WEBER. Okay. Perfect.

You also said a risk was retaliatory attacks. You also said insider attacks was a risk, where those troops, the people that we are seeking to help, would actually wind up turning their guns on us and killing our troops.

Number two, you said conduct limited standoff strikes. Your cost was in the billions, especially depending on the duration. You also said, and I am quoting you, "Regime could withstand limited strikes by dispersing its assets." It is as if we gave them a 2-week notice. You also said retaliatory attacks were possible, and the probability of collateral damage would impact civilians and foreigners inside the country.

Number three, you said establish a no-fly zone. Your estimate was it costs \$500 million initially and averaging as much as \$1 billion a month. You said there was a risk of losing a U.S. aircraft, which would then, "which would require us to insert personnel recovery forces," a.k.a., boots on the ground. You also said, "It may also fail to reduce the violence or shift the momentum because the regime relies overwhelmingly on surface-fired mortars, artillery, and missiles." In other words, it is not a very good option, in my estimation.

Number four, you said establish buffer zones. You estimated that at \$1 billion a month.

And number five, you said control chemical weapons. Risks: Boots on the ground, American women and men; \$1 billion a month, which I understand the Secretaries of State and Defense are not advocating that.

But I have a simple question for you. Everything I read from your summary indicated to me that there is absolutely no guarantee of a lasting peace in Syria or in the region and nor that they are American-friendly after we have a gargantuan outlay of American money, resources, and maybe American blood and even lives if they retaliate—absolutely no guarantee. Would you say that is a fair statement?

General DEMPSEY. I just would remind you, the answer to the letter that I sent to Representative Engel was related to the question that I received, which is, what would it take to tip the balance in favor of the opposition and lead to the overthrow of the Assad regime?

Mr. WEBER. Okay.

General DEMPSEY. So I want to make sure we are separate from what we are doing here today.

Mr. WEBER. No, I got that. I appreciate that. I will direct that to Mr. Hagel.

Would you say that is a fair statement, no guarantee of an outcome on the other end?

Secretary HAGEL. No guarantee of the outcome—

Mr. WEBER. Of peace in Syria, peace in the region, and that whoever comes out on the other side will be our friends—no guarantee.

Secretary HAGEL. Well, but that is not the stated objective of what we are talking about.

Mr. WEBER. Well, that wasn't my question, sir. My question was, would you guarantee that after trying to establish the objective that you are seeking to establish, we still do not have a guarantee on the other end of a stable Syria, a stable region, and whoever comes out on the other side would be our friends?

Secretary HAGEL. Well, I wouldn't guarantee anything. This is, as I believe the last 3 hours have been very clear about, this is unpredictable, it is complicated, it is dangerous. There are many interests that are surging through the Middle East, in particular Syria.

Mr. WEBER. Okay.

Secretary HAGEL. What we are thinking through diplomatically, militarily, international coalition, all the other factors that we have talked about today, are—

Mr. WEBER. Forgive me, but I am running out of time.

Secretary HAGEL [continuing]. To get to one thing, and that is a diplomatic settlement.

Mr. WEBER. Okay.

Secretary Kerry, your response, please?

Secretary KERRY. I can't give you a guarantee about the outcome in Syria as a whole, but I can give you a guarantee that the United States of America can make it clear to Assad that it is going to cost him to use chemical weapons and we can have an impact on deterring and degrading his capacity. That guarantee is what I can give you, and that is what the President is seeking to do.

Mr. WEBER. But at what price, I would add.

In my last 15 seconds—

Secretary KERRY. Well, not at the price that you described, absolutely not at the price that you described.

Mr. WEBER. Well, let me just say, if American credibility is at stake here, let there be no mistake: If anybody were to attack us, this Congress, in my view, would respond, would authorize the full force and fury of our very capable military.

Secretary KERRY. But, Congressman—Mr. Chairman, this is important.

But, Congressman, not everything comes down in terms of threat or potential future, you know, threat to our country to somebody

attacking us. Lots of things we do we do in preparation and as a matter of deterrence. And we also do it in the context, on occasion, as we did in Bosnia, to make peace, to have a settlement, to save lives. That is what we achieved.

And so we have achieved that previously, and I believe in the long run it is vital for the United States to assert this principle and to begin to move this troubled part of the world in a different direction. That is what we are working on.

Chairman ROYCE. Mr. Bera from California.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to the witnesses for their patience. Obviously, this has been a long day. It has been a long week, but it is of critical importance that we are having this discussion. I applaud the President for including Congress in this debate.

I agree that we have to show resolve and we have show that we are committed to our allies, but my constituents and I still need to be convinced not that atrocities have occurred—you know, we all are unanimous in our condemnation of what Assad has done—but we need to know exactly what our goals are and our objectives, because this is increasingly a complex situation.

And to that extent, you know, let me ask Secretary Hagel a question. When I was home in Sacramento County this past weekend, people were stopping me in the grocery stores, my neighbors were pulling me aside on the street. You know, I think all of my colleagues have been inundated with phone calls, emails. And almost unanimously, people don't want us to strike Syria. They are fatigued.

And I answer to these people. These are the people that I represent. So my question, Secretary Hagel, is, what can I tell my constituents about why these strikes are in our national security interests, why these strikes matter to these folks that are struggling every day? How do I effectively communicate what our plan is?

Secretary HAGEL. I understand your question clearly, and I understand the responsibility you have to give those you represent a clear answer. So that is partly why the President wanted to bring this before the Congress, so the American people would have an opportunity to hear all the questions and get the answers.

My answer to you is, for you to give to your constituents, is it is clearly in the interest of our country because, as we have noted here today, the use of chemical weapons, if it becomes a norm, if it becomes a standard, if it becomes an art of war, a method of war that is accepted by the world, which it is has not been for the last 100 years, it jeopardizes our country, our homeland, our troops, our people all over the world.

When you look at the nations that have stockpiles, one nation in particular, Syria, that we are talking about, has used those. North Korea has them. What about Iran's threat to all of us? So this is in the interest of the United States, aside from the international norm.

Mr. BERA. So, listening to those concerns, listening to what the strategic goals are here and why it is in the national security interest, again, listening to my constituents, you know, they understand the importance of maintaining our credibility and our standing as

a Nation. But, again, Syria seems so far away for them. These issues seem very far away from them.

And, you know, as we discuss it here, we are sending a message to Assad, but we are not securing these chemical stockpiles. We are not—and I think, General Dempsey, you in your testimony and in the past have indicated how difficult it would be to secure chemical stockpiles, to make sure that they don't fall in the hands of terrorists, of individuals who would want to use them against us here on our own homeland as well as with our allies.

But that is not our stated goal. Our stated goal is not to make sure that we are securing our homeland, that we are making sure our neighborhoods are safe. It is a very difficult goal to articulate to my constituents.

Secretary HAGEL. Let me just remind us of something which has been noted earlier here in this hearing. Next week we are going to celebrate—not celebrate—we are going to remember what happened in this country on that September day in 2001. And we all recall where we were.

How many of my constituents, during those days, in Nebraska or your constituents in California ever thought about or even knew where Afghanistan was or had ever even heard of this organization called al-Qaeda?

There is a clear, living example of how we are not insulated from the rest of the world, how things can happen to the United States, in this country, if we are not vigilant and think through these things and stay ahead of these things and take action to prevent these things from occurring.

Maybe something would not happen in this country for a couple of years. I don't know. But it has been noted up here that the next President, the next chairman and ranking, the next group of Members who will occupy your seats may have to deal with this in a bigger way if we are not paying attention to it now.

But the 9/11 anniversary I think is a very clear example you can use with your constituents.

Chairman ROYCE. Scott Perry, Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, each of you, for your military service.

I would just like to start out with some corrections for the record since it has been a topic of discussion. I have got the quote here from the President: "A red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation." That is the President, August 20th of 2012, just because some folks like to revise history.

Secretary Kerry, if you could, just one question to start out and then a couple more quotes. Would you consider sarin gas a weapon of mass destruction?

Secretary KERRY. Yes.

Mr. PERRY. VX gas, a weapon of mass destruction?

Secretary KERRY. Yes.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. So those two were used in Iraq, found in Iraq before I got there and found in Iraq when I got there, for those who say that the past administration lied about weapons of mass destruction.

Now, some quotes here for you. This is from the President:

“The President does not have the power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the Nation.”

That was in 2007.

“If the U.S. goes in and attacks another country without a U.N. mandate and without clear evidence that can be presented, then there are questions in terms of whether international law supports it.”

And that was August 23, 2013.

August 31, 2013:

“While I believe I have the authority to carry out this military action without specific congressional authorization, I know that the country will be stronger and our actions will be even more effective if the strike is authorized by Congress.”

Now, Secretary Kerry, you, President Obama, and Vice President Biden have all previously expressed your support for the War Powers Resolution. Section 2(c) of the statute asserts that the President may constitutionally use U.S. Armed Forces abroad only pursuant to a declaration of war, specific statutory authorization, a national emergency created by an attack on the United States.

We have a credibility and trust issue here. I questioned Ambassador Ford right here in this room in March about our strategy, and I could get no clear answer regarding the crossing of a red line, which I think was a capricious statement based on the lack of a strategy. However, we are here right now with this situation in front of us.

My direct question to you, Secretary, is, will the President abide by the wishes of the representatives of the American people if there is a “no” vote on a resolution in this Congress?

Secretary KERRY. Well, I can’t—look, I can’t answer for the President. He answers for himself, obviously, and I answer to him.

But I can guarantee that the President has made it clear that he believes he has the authority within the Constitution in the executive branch to be able to take an action without congressional approval. And that has happened again and again under Presidencies of both parties.

So, you know, I don’t think we are going to advantage ourselves with that constitutional debate here right now—

Mr. PERRY. But I think that is pivotal and critical. While we talk about how we are going to do what we are going to do, we haven’t talked enough about if we have the authority—

Secretary KERRY. Rather than talk about—

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. If the President has the authority to do it.

And with all due respect, Mr. Secretary, with all the—you know, I am glad that the President came to Congress to get this question answered and have us involved. He made the statement that he was going before he came to Congress. And it is my opinion that when the American people said we don’t want you to do this and when the international community said we are not with you on this

and the British Parliament said no, then he came to the Congress——

Secretary KERRY. Well, Congressman——

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. Not because he had this shining vision at the beginning of a grand strategy which would involve the Congress once the red line was crossed.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, look, we can have a discussion here. Needless to say, you don't agree with the President's approach to some of these issues over a period of time, maybe many of them, maybe all of them. And you are a Member of the other party, and the President isn't your President of choice; he is the President we have.

It doesn't do us any good here to debate those differences with the President. What is important is to discuss here whether or not the fact that he has come to you and he is requesting this authority and he has made his decision as President of the United States.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. And I would say that that is fair. Thank you——

Secretary KERRY. So now let's decide whether or not together we can find the common ground in the interests of our country to do what is necessary to hold a man accountable for his use of chemical weapons of mass destruction. That is the question.

Chairman ROYCE. We have with us Tulsi Gabbard, who flew a long way from Hawaii to be with us today.

Tulsi?

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the three of you and your service and commitment to our country on so many levels.

I also have the privilege and honor of serving our country in uniform and deployed with the Hawaii Army National Guard to Iraq back in 2005. And one of my daily responsibilities there serving in a medical unit was going through a list every single day of every injury and casualty throughout the entire region, looking for and taking care of our Hawaii soldiers.

And it is those experiences and those memories, as well as the knowledge of the many innocents who have been killed in Syria, that I carry with me every day but through this discussion that we have and take our responsibility very seriously, as do you.

I think there is no question, we have seen it clear today, that the use of these chemical weapons is horrifying. My concerns that I would like to address with you lie in the fact that the path that you are advocating for us forward still remains unclear to me on many levels: The right course of action, the most effective course of action, and whether or not the stated objectives that you have spoken about today and previously, as well as making sure that we have a very realistic and honest understanding of what the next steps are and what the unintended consequences of this action could be. And that is really where my concern is, is the answer to the question of what happens next.

I think that we can place many limitations on what role the United States will play, both through resolutions and in other means. But whether we like it or not, the consequences of our actions will impact the civil war, a very complicated region. And once

we are involved with our military, it is likely that we will have to consider the extended role that we will play in any escalation or retaliations that occur.

So I have three major questions that I would like you to address. One is the very realistic possibility that a limited strike will not achieve your objective, the targeted strike to debilitate Assad, resulting in a deterrence of his further use of the weapons of mass destruction, both for him and around the world.

And I ask just to look back in Iraq, where there were thoughts that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, he was deposed, captured, and hanged. And what you are advocating for falls very short of that action. Why would taking this lesser action deter him or other dictators around the world, when, clearly, that example of Saddam Hussein has not deterred Assad?

Secondly, each of you has made a distinction between this limited strike and providing aid to opposition forces. By weakening Assad with this blow, are we not indirectly assisting the opposition forces in gaining strength?

And, lastly, with the control and use of chemical weapons, General Dempsey, you stated that the targets you are talking about will be directly linked to means of control of these chemical weapons without actually releasing the weapons themselves. And I am wondering what your strategy and objectives are regarding securing these weapons across Syria, especially if Assad loses control or if the regime falls, how we secure them, given the nonsupport from Russia and China, in particular from al-Qaeda and terrorists, people who have stated very explicitly their desire to harm our people and American interests.

Secretary KERRY. Very good questions, Congresswoman. And, first of all, thank you for your service very, very much.

General, do you want to just take the last one, and then we can take the other two?

General DEMPSEY. Yeah, I can do that.

I guess this is what we get for training you how to ask questions about military operations. And thanks for your service.

I will take on the question of security of the weapons in the event of the fall of the regime. We do have, at the classified level, contingency plans with regional partners to secure a finite, a limited number of sites.

The challenge we have with that is the number of potential sites. And the regime has a tendency to move their chemical weapons around, we think to secure them but at some point it may not be to secure them.

And so I would just tell you that we do have contingency plans with regional partners for the security of the weapons, but it is a very heavy lift.

Secretary KERRY. With respect to the limited strike, not achieving the objective, I think the General has spoken to that earlier, that he has confidence that we have the ability to be able to achieve our objective. If not in the first, you know, volley, certainly we have the ability to achieve that objective.

And, secondly, you said would it inadvertently or would it not, in fact, help the opposition? And I have said many times, as a collateral component of this, any degradation of Assad's military will,

of course, be a benefit to the opposition. But that is not the fundamental purpose of the initiative the President is asking you to engage in.

Chairman ROYCE. Ron DeSantis from Florida.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to all the witnesses, and thank you all for your service, particularly military service.

Secretary Kerry, you spoke about how the use of this gas breached the norms of civilized behavior, international norms, and that we need to enforce this norm kind of like you would enforce lessons learned by children and bullies I think that you had said.

And I know you got a little irritated about the Benghazi issue, and it was not on your watch, and you are not responsible. But as I look at this, that same line of reasoning should have applied to Benghazi. The assassination of a diplomat breaches norms that were recognized probably far longer than norms against use of sarin gas, and yet the U.S. has not acted to avenge the deaths of the four Americans, including our Ambassador, who were massacred in Benghazi. And that lack of response, I think, using the same line of reasoning, certainly could embolden terror groups and Islamic malcontents that they can do this and that we may not respond forcefully.

Now, you are not responsible for that, but there is a frustration among some of my constituents about how we have handled that, not on your watch, but I just wanted to clear up how some of us view that.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, let me speak to that, because I appreciate completely—I think that is a little different from the earlier question, so to speak—I appreciate and respect completely the need for justice to be done.

And believe me, we have this discussion in the State Department and in the White House about the steps that are being taken. And there are steps being taken. That is not a back-burner issue. And in an appropriate setting, I would be delighted to share with you exactly what is going on. But that accountability is a priority for the President, it is a priority for us—

Mr. DESANTIS. Well, we appreciate that, and we are waiting for that.

Secretary Kerry, do you think that striking Syria for Assad using poison gas will have an effect on whether Iran decides to continue with its nuclear program or abandon it?

Secretary KERRY. I think whether or not the United States stands up at this moment, as I have described earlier, to enforce this almost-century-old prohibition on the use of weapons will, in fact, affect not only Iran but loads of people's thinking about whether the United States is good for its word.

Mr. DESANTIS. So you think that it is possible that Iran, seeing a limited strike against Assad, that they will actually decide to abandon their weapons—

Secretary KERRY. No, I didn't say that. I said it will affect their thinking about how serious the United States is. I can't predict what they are going to decide to do or whether they will abandon it or not. But I will tell you this: It will enter into their calculation about what we might or not be prepared to do.

And if we don't do anything, I absolutely guarantee you that, too, will enter into their calculation.

Mr. DESANTIS. I guess my fear is that they have already made their determination and they are going to continue with it, but I guess we will find out.

In terms of these opposition groups—and I think it is true that when you degrade Assad, you are benefitting the opposition groups. And I think that the bulk of that energy right now is with Sunni supremacists and al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists. But it is difficult to kind of figure out where everybody is on all this.

And there was a quote that you had given about when we were evaluating the Libyan opposition. You said,

“We didn't know who all the people were in Eastern Europe either. We don't always know who they all are. If you asked Lafayette the question if he knew everyone here when he helped us during the American Revolution, what he would say. I think that you have to kind of have a sense of the course of history and what they are fighting for.”

Is that pretty much—do you stand by that quote and, kind of, the difficulty in evaluating?

Secretary KERRY. Well, let me—

Mr. DESANTIS. And I ask that because, you know, we have seen, with the Arab Spring, we have seen the reaction to us going into Afghanistan and Iraq. And, kind of, what is the animating impulse in these Muslim countries? And there was a comment about we would like to see a pro-Western government take the place of Assad, and I have not seen any evidence to suggest that that is what would be the primary impulse motivating the people in a post-Assad Syria. Indeed, I fear that what would motivate them would be the Muslim Brotherhood, Sunni Islamism, of course al-Qaeda-type terror groups.

And so that is the sense of history that a lot of us see. And that is why, when we are looking at a potential strike, how that could affect the civil war, we don't want to be doing something that is going to lead to an outcome that is as bad as having Assad or potentially even worse.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, a very good question. And the answer is there are some really bad actors in some of these groups in Syria. Al-Nusra is not the worst, but they are really bad. And there are a couple of other groups that, you know, some people characterize as worse.

But one of the things that is concentrating the President's thinking about Syria and the reason for supporting the moderate opposition is to have a buttress against those folks who, if Syria continues to move in the direction it has been going, if there is an implosion, they will be strengthened, there will be more of them.

This is, in fact, something that does bring Russia and the United States together. When I was in Russia and met with Putin, he discussed specifically their concerns about the extremists.

But Syria, traditionally, historically, in the recent years, has been a secular country. And the vast majority of the opposition, 75 percent, 70 percent of it, is hopeful to have a very different Syria—a free Syria, a Syria that has minority rights protected, that is in-

clusive. And that is what the opposition has in written form committed themselves to and is talking about wherever they go in the world.

So I hope you will recognize that the best way to isolate the extremist components of the Syrian fabric is to more rapidly build up the opposition and diminish Assad's capacity to prolong this.

Chairman ROYCE. Joaquin Castro of Texas.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, for your service, first of all, and for your testimony today.

You know, there have been a lot of strong arguments made on both sides, both in favor of taking action and, quite frankly, against taking action. I have had a chance to hear about 1,500 comments, from social media posts to emails, calls, faxes, et cetera.

And just to recap, I think I have boiled it down to the big arguments for, for example: First, that there is a moral imperative to act because of the use of chemical weapons; second, that we need to strike to prevent repeat behavior; third, that inaction will embolden others, specifically Iran and North Korea; fourth, that the U.S. reputation is on the line, that we need to show that we are not bluffing and that the world can count on our word; and, five, the effect on our allies.

The arguments against include that this war is not worthwhile, that there are extremists on both sides, that America should focus on its own problems; that military action will have no real effect, that the scope is not enough, that these actions are not enough to change things; third, that military action will make things worse, that there will be collateral damage, increase in refugees, war will lead to more war; fourth, that we should take alternative action. You have heard folks say that we should try diplomacy or try to do this with a coalition if that is possible. And then, fifth, that the war is too expensive and, again, that America should focus on its own issues at home.

And in making this decision, you know, I publically stated in San Antonio, the town that I represent, which is Military City, USA, that I am open to the idea of military strikes but that I want to review the evidence. And that is where I still stand today.

And so, with that in mind, I have a few quick questions for you. The first is, if we do act militarily or if we decide not to, if this Congress votes yes or no, what is the policy that we are establishing or the precedent that we are establishing?

And, important for me, what will this mean for future generations of Americans, post-baby-boomer generations of Americans, Generation X and millennials, and Americans that have not been born yet? Where will that leave America for them.

Secretary KERRY. Well, Congressman, those are all very appropriate considerations, each of the ones that you have listed.

Where will we be? I believe that we would be not establishing a precedent; we would be upholding a precedent. We would be upholding the unbelievably committed global reaction to the horror of World War I, to the use of gas rampantly, and to the world's condemnation of that and the fact that over 180 countries have signed on to this convention. We would be upholding it.

And from the perspective of, as you say, Generation X or baby boomers or whatever you want to assign as a concept, I think it is a vital statement about multilateral, international commitment to norms by which you and your generation and the future generations would want to live. And I would hope it would be something you would overwhelmingly support, because it is a matter of values and interests coming together in an appropriate manner. And I think the absence of our willingness to enforce that would be very dangerous for our country for the long term.

Mr. CASTRO. And, Mr. Secretary, let me ask you, what precedent do we set if we don't act?

Secretary KERRY. Well, for the United States of America, it would be a very unusual statement of our unwillingness to uphold something that we have fought for and been part of for a long, long period of time. I think we would be walking away from a responsibility and perhaps signaling a new moment of confrontation and difficulty for our country in many other respects, on many other issues.

Mr. CASTRO. Do you feel that it would fundamentally start to change America's role in the world?

Secretary KERRY. Well, it would change the world's perception of America's willingness to live up to its traditional role in the world, and it would certainly have a profound impact on people's judgments about what we are willing to stand up for and not stand up for.

And I caution you politely and humbly, I believe very, very deeply it will invite other contests of conflict that will put us to the test and potentially with much graver consequences.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Chairman ROYCE. We go to Mr. Doug Collins of Georgia.

Mr. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

And I thank you for being here. I thank you for your service.

And I associate myself with the Representative from Hawaii, in serving in Iraq and knowing the issues going on. One of the benefits of sitting down here on the bottom row is you get to listen. You hear a lot of things, and you can get a lot of questions asked.

Secretary KERRY. The only benefit.

Mr. COLLINS. And I am not going to steal the thunder of some others that may come, but there is some—what I have heard today, though, still concerns me greatly. And I walked into this hearing concerned and very deeply concerned about the actions we are taking; I am still there.

Many of those have to do with military questions and the questions that come from the, you know, statements such as, Secretary Hagel, you made, that there is no clarity on the ground, that there are no good options in Syria, these kind of things that lead me to an understanding of what happens is, you know, the limited-involvement nature, which has been talked about over and over here, and the high confidence that that limited nature would be effective. But if it would not, your statement just a moment ago, "well, after the first volley" leaves an open ending, well, there is another volley and another volley that would come if it did not achieve the end.

I want to address, though, for a few questions on this issue. According to the unclassified assessment that was given, there was

information that suggested that a possible chemical attack was imminent on August 21st. In fact, what was said was from August 18th, Sunday, through Wednesday the 21st there were Syrian chemical weapons personnel operating in the area.

The report goes on to say that 3 days prior to the attack there were strings of human signals and geospatial intelligence gathered showing the Assad regime preparing for a chemical attack.

With over 48 hours' notice and the recent history of chemical weapons being used in Syria, did the U.S. military not take action or quickly enough to convene the U.N. Security Council? Why did we not act, knowing the history—and I am going to come back to this part later—as quickly as possible? Why was there nothing done at that point?

Secretary KERRY. Because that information isn't real time in terms of the way it comes in. It goes through a process. So it wasn't—there wasn't time.

Mr. COLLINS. Then you really—and I appreciate that answer, but you really now concern me even more that our intelligence operation, without getting into a, in this setting, discussion of this, that if it was not real time, we were finding out after the fact, then some of my concern, General Dempsey, would be that the limited engagement to, as you said, take out the operation or the engagement of the chemical weapons and not destroy all the chemical weapons, what is the confidence level? Although you have stated high, why should I or anybody else in this committee say that there is a concern that our intelligence is not real time enough to answer your question?

General DEMPSEY. Different kinds of intelligence, sir. As you probably know—and thanks for your service, too, by the way—so there is signals intelligence, which is what you are referring to. There is full motion video. There is national technical means that allow us to establish pattern of life. It is different kinds of intelligence.

Mr. COLLINS. But with the movement, there is a concern that the initial assessment could be wrong and there would be—I guess what I am getting at here is there seems to be a lot of thought out there that this is a one-strike operation. Although I am getting, you know, rumor now—and they are not rumor, but there are discussions of a 30-day or 40-day or 60-day, 90-day window. I guess that is the concern I am having. Many in America are simply saying, are we going to throw a few cruise missiles or a shot across the bow, is the term that was used? That is not what we are looking at here. This could be a—are we saying this could be a sustained attack? And or is this a one—and, you know, without getting in or telegraphing, that is the concern.

I will stop it there. I won't ask you to answer that. But that is a concern that I think many should have.

In this atmosphere, also, very quickly, Secretary Kerry and Secretary Hagel, how we, after the initial gas attacks earlier in the year, we upped our ante to those that were fighting against Assad. Do we have—and, again, how much of that has actually got there? In a real short answer. How much of that equipment or assistance is actually making a difference? Because I think one of the Sen-

ators and others have said we have not actually been able to get that equipment to them.

Secretary KERRY. I think we have made a difference but not as much yet as we would like.

Mr. COLLINS. Okay.

Secretary KERRY. But I don't want to go into any other details here.

Mr. COLLINS. I understand that, and I appreciate that.

But in light of what we are doing here, I think it is very pertinent information. Because like I said, if we do this——

Secretary KERRY. Well, one of the reasons, if I can just tell you very quickly, it is because it wasn't authorized——

Mr. COLLINS. I understand.

Secretary KERRY. [continuing]. Until a couple months ago.

Mr. COLLINS. I get that.

Secretary KERRY. So we are just getting up on it.

Mr. COLLINS. But if we were to do this, it goes back to the saying of a former Secretary, that if we break it, we own it. And this is a concern here.

Also, I want to go back to something here that you said earlier——

Secretary KERRY. We didn't break it.

Mr. COLLINS. I understand.

Secretary KERRY. It is broken.

Mr. COLLINS. But if we shoot missiles in there, we are involving ourselves in degrading stock.

One quick question. And I want to give you a chance to walk back something. And it disturbed me when you said it, and I think it was a misspeak, so I am going to give you a chance. Basically, you said, at this point in time, the reason we are acting now is the level of death or the level of carnage had risen to a level in which you felt like you needed to act.

In my mind, what you just said a little while ago was that we had to have a lot of bodies to make a compelling case and that one didn't matter. And I don't believe that is what you meant.

Secretary KERRY. No——

Mr. COLLINS. So I am going to give you a chance to walk that statement back. Because if we are truly doing this because of death, then one would matter, when he has been doing this for several months.

Secretary KERRY. I appreciate it, Congressman. I don't want to leave any misinterpretation with respect to that.

In the first instances, we had a lot of difficulty getting a lock down on the level of intelligence that made everybody comfortable. And partly because it was a smaller event, you didn't have the kind of evidence, there wasn't the kind of immediacy, social media, other things that we have here, signatures, SIGINT, and so forth. We just didn't have it. In this instance, we do, and it happens also to be an even more egregious event.

But that is not—the body numbers aren't the distinction. It is the level of the evidence, the quality, and the comfort level. And, at that point in time, the President, you know——

Mr. COLLINS. Right.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. Didn't want to rush into something.

Mr. COLLINS. Well, I think these are the very things that caused my concern——

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mark Meadows of North Carolina.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank each of you for your patience and your tenure here at this hearing.

I want to ask you specifically and go into some of the questions with Hezbollah and let's look at their involvement.

If there was an attempt on their part to gain access or the intelligence to chemical weapons, under the authorization that the President seeks, would you see them as an acceptable target for having the ability to acquire that or the attempt to acquire that?

Secretary KERRY. Well, again, I don't want to get into targeting here. It is inappropriate, except to say to you the President's——

Mr. MEADOWS. Would that be covered under his authorization?

Secretary KERRY. No. The President's authorization does not apply to Iran or Hezbollah or other entities. It is not entity-specific. It is with respect to the Assad regime's capacity with respect to chemical weapons. And it is solely focused on the degrading and the preventing of the use by the Assad regime.

Mr. MEADOWS. So are we actively engaged to make sure that Hezbollah is not gaining access to these chemical weapons to be used in another theater?

Secretary KERRY. Well, General, do you want to——

General DEMPSEY. Yeah. We do know a little about that, whether they even want any part of chemical weapons and, if so, what might be the instrument. I can tell you our regional partners are very interested in that question. But it really would be classified.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. So you are saying, then, if Syria transferred their chemical weapons to Iran, to a state-controlled entity, the receiving of those chemical weapons would not be one that would dictate action from us?

Secretary KERRY. No, it is not. These are not externally focused at all, and I want to emphasize that. I will add that there is evidence that both Iran and Hezbollah have opposed the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay.

So let me go on further, because I think, Secretary Kerry, your quote was, "Do we mean what we say?" And so I think that is a critical question today, because is this a new departure? Are we going to start a new foreign policy where we truly mean what we say?

Because about 6 minutes into your testimony, you mentioned that there were 11 other events where gas or chemical weapons was used there in Syria, and yet we have done nothing. And so, when we start to look at that, is this a new day for foreign policy where we are going to start to say something and mean it and draw a red line that truly is a red line?

Secretary KERRY. Well, let me say with respect to those other incidents, this is an intelligence community assessment——

Mr. MEADOWS. But this is not new intelligence.

Secretary KERRY. No, no, no——

Mr. MEADOWS. I mean, we have known this——

Secretary KERRY. No, I know this.

Mr. MEADOWS [continuing]. For many months.

Secretary KERRY. Congressman, I know this, because I have been at the forefront. I was here——

Mr. MEADOWS. I have read your reports, yeah.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. Arguing this and talking about it last year, too.

The problem was, again, with many of those, the quality of the evidence, the level of the event, and people were uncomfortable with the notion that that, in fact—it called for action, but it didn't necessarily rise to the level of what the President has decided——

Mr. MEADOWS. So what is that level? Is it 1,000 deaths? Is it——

Secretary KERRY. No, it is not based on deaths. It is based on, I think, an exhaustive——

Mr. MEADOWS. Because either a use requires action or it doesn't.

Secretary KERRY. I beg your pardon?

Mr. MEADOWS. Either when they use——

Secretary KERRY. Well, I don't know, what was the date when the President drew the red line publicly? I don't recall that.

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, but it had been, you know——

Secretary KERRY. I think some of those events were prior to that.

Mr. MEADOWS. Sure.

Secretary KERRY. And so I think there has been a steady effort——

Mr. MEADOWS. Because we go back all the way to August of last year.

Secretary KERRY. And I think there was a steady effort by the administration and others to try to send messages, and they were sent very powerfully, I might add. Messages were sent to the Russians. They were sent directly through to Iranians. The messages were sent——

Mr. MEADOWS. But today we are talking about military action.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. In an effort to try to ratchet it down.

Now I think there is a sense of those efforts all having been exhausted and this, therefore, being a remedy of last resort.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. So when do we ultimately get—when can our enemies and our allies depend on us to take action when we have these kinds of things that happen? Because CIA reports——

Secretary KERRY. When the House of Representatives passes the President's request for this resolution.

Mr. MEADOWS. As it relates to Syria and everybody else? Because this is just Syria, but I am talking about internationally.

Secretary KERRY. Well, internationally, Congressman, I think we have been proving our word good on everything the President has said he is going to do. He has drawn down in Iraq. He is drawing down in Afghanistan. We are working on a Middle East peace process. We have been involved with Egypt and many other countries. We are continuing to prosecute al-Qaeda in Yemen and elsewhere. We have decimated al-Qaeda in Pakistan. We are working on a bilateral security arrangement with Afghanistan.

I mean, these are things that are all going on. And I think, you know, these broad, sweeping assessments don't actually do justice to what is happening.

Chairman ROYCE. We are going to Ted Yoho of Florida.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for enduring the length of time here. And I hope you men are men of prayer and that we seek guidance and wisdom as we work through this.

And I agree with many of my colleagues that our foreign policy is confusing to the world, our allies, and to the American people. And that is why I think we are sitting here today. The primary role of the U.S. Government, according to our Constitution, is national security. I do not see a direct threat to the U.S. from the internal civil war in Syria, as deplorable as it is.

You know, we have got 1,400 to 2,000 people killed by chemical weapons. I think that is despicable. But what about the 108,000 that have been killed by conventional warfare? Is that not just as despicable?

I cannot, I will not, nor shall not support intervention in this conflict. Our action would be one of attacking a sovereign nation, a nation that did not attack us, an act of war. And if we start war, we invite war, do we not? And I view this as unconstitutional, to attack a country that did not attack us. I and the people I represent said not just "no" but something like "heck, no," don't get involved in this.

And the same thing I hear over and over here. The CWC agreement signed by 189 countries states that any country that produces, transports, stores, sells, or uses chemical weapons are in violation of that agreement. Who are those countries? You have North Korea, possibly Russia, as Secretary Hagel said, was supplying Syria with possible chemical weapons. Maybe Iran or China, the U.S. There are probably other countries.

So if we act now against Syria, does that mean we act against other nations? And do we act in totality? And do we act now? You know, where does this stop? I mean, once you cross a red line—and this goes back to our confusing foreign policy. It was a red line; it wasn't a red line. I just think we need clarity in this.

And I want to know where the 188 countries are that signed the agreement, the U.N., the Arab League, and NATO demanding that we come to the table on one side and Mr. Assad on the other side.

I implore you guys and the administration to find a diplomatic solution. Because all I have heard is military intervention. And I know you guys have talked about diplomatic solutions, but the clout of the United States and that we supply the majority of the foreign aid around the world, that we need to bring people and demand people come to the table. And this is a moment in time, in history, where we, America, can lead in a new direction, a direction where we can bring together a coalition of countries that the other 188 that signed the CWC agreement and negotiate a political and diplomatic solution. It is a time for a new direction in our foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. And we can win this, and it can be done and won with diplomacy and not with guns and bombs.

Senator Kerry, you said yesterday that you could not guarantee that U.S. troops would not be on the ground.

Secretary KERRY. No, I did guarantee that they wouldn't be, and I guaranteed it again today.

Mr. YOHO. I have the transcripts right here, and——

Secretary KERRY. I think if you read the whole transcript, I said clearly there will be no troops on the ground.

Mr. YOHO. All right, even if the weapons fell into the hands of the bad people?

Secretary KERRY. There is nothing in this resolution——

Mr. YOHO. Okay.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. Whatsoever——

Mr. YOHO. All right.

Secretary KERRY [continuing]. That would put troops on the ground. Nothing.

Mr. YOHO. I just wanted clarity on that. Thank you.

General Dempsey, you stated that we would need thousands of support troops on the ground, you didn't say in Syria but close by. Where would they be?

General DEMPSEY. Not related to this resolution. That is related to whether we took a decision to support the opposition.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Well, the way I read this briefing out of the CRS as of 2 days ago, it said in Syria, if we attack Syria.

General DEMPSEY. No. No, sir.

Mr. YOHO. Okay.

Do we have support and authorization from Turkey to use their air bases, or can that not be divulged?

General DEMPSEY. That is something we should talk about in a classified setting.

Mr. YOHO. Okay.

General DEMPSEY. Same with Jordan and other places.

Mr. YOHO. Does the CWC or, according to you, Secretary Kerry, the world's resolve or the international community, is there a doctrine that the U.S. should lead in moral conflicts like this? Why is it always America out front? I know we have the best military, and I am very proud of that. But why are we out leading this again?

Secretary KERRY. Well, let me answer that.

And, Mr. Chairman, I have to take more than 40 seconds to do it, but it is a vital, vital question for Americans and for this issue.

Congressman, I wish the world were a little more simple. I grew up in the cold war; I think all of us did. And it was pretty East-West, communism, you know, the West. That is not the world we live in today. When the Berlin Wall fell, so did all of the things that tamped down a lot of sectarian, religious, and other kinds of conflict in the world.

And the truth is, you know, we are 1 week away from 9/11 commemoration. Nine-eleven happened because there were ungoverned spaces in which people who wanted to fight the West, who are culturally and historically opposed to modernity wanted to attack us. And they did.

And I think most people, in making judgments about how to keep our country safe, make the judgment that there are a lot of folks out there who are committed to violent acts against lots of different people because that is what they want to do. And we have to defend ourselves differently today and work to deal with these issues in a different way than we ever have before.

Now, I would just say to you, you know, we do have direct interests in what is happening in Syria. There is a direct interest in our credibility with respect to this issue. And you asked the question, you know, why does the United States have to be out there? Well, because what our forebears and, you know, what those—have you ever been to the cemetery in France, you know, above those beaches? Why did those guys have to go do that? Because we were standing up with people for a set of values and fighting for freedom.

And no country has liberated as much land or fought as many battles as the United States of America and turned around and given it back to the people who live there and who can own it and run it. We are the indispensable nation. This is because of who we are and what we have achieved, and we should be proud of it. And we have a great tradition to try to live up to, in terms of trying to help people to see a peaceful road, not a road of jihadism.

A lot of people out in the Middle East count on us. Moderate Arab world, not religious extremists, they count on us to help them be able to be able to transition. That is part of what the Arab Spring is about. And it is not going to end quickly. It is not going to be over just like that. Our own struggle for freedom took a long time.

So I think we have to have a longer view here. And I think we have to think about the ways in which we can protect ourselves. And I guarantee you, if we don't stand up against chemical weapons in this instance, we are not serving our national security interests.

Chairman ROYCE. We go now to Mr. Luke Messer of Indiana.

Mr. MESSER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think someone has to go last today. That is me. I certainly thank my colleagues for sitting here on the front row with me. Thank the chairman for calling us all back to what I think is very important work. Thank you for your service and your stamina today as well. We are entering almost the fourth hour of this hearing.

I appreciate and respect the President's decision to bring this matter of authorization before Congress. I was one of a broad group of 150 folks that signed on to a letter that requested that. I appreciate the President heeding that request. I understand the legal arguments about whether or not it was necessary for him to do that. I would associate myself with Congressman Perry's comments that that decision has now been made, and the President has brought this before Congress, and I believe it is very important that the President abide by that vote.

I won't revisit all the other questions that others have asked today. I will tell you that I make that comment as someone who, if I had to vote today on whether or not to authorize force against Syria under the circumstances presented before me, I would vote yes. I certainly believe it is a vote of conscience. I recognize that people of good conscience can come to different conclusions based on the facts. And there is no more somber responsibility for a Member of Congress than the decision about whether or not to send men and women into combat, because we all know what the inevitable result of that can be.

The facts, as I see them, are that chemical weapons were used, innocent children were gassed. Clearly, our allies, like Israel, in the

region believe action is needed. Clearly, evil dictators in Iran, North Korea, and elsewhere are watching. And undoubtedly, inaction will embolden them.

I am no fan of this President's foreign policy. Frankly, I believe that mismanagement in many instances over the course of the last several years have made the problems in Syria worse.

But I want to make a point to all of you, and it may lead to a question, but it is just simply this: That that being my belief, the President, and the three of you as a team and others, have a lot of work to do to explain the necessity for this action with the American people. Much of what you say the American people understand. We are all aghast at the atrocities that occurred in Syria. America doesn't like to watch bullies stand by and do evil things to their people.

But the American people inherently understand, intuitively understand that there are high risks to action here, too. And if I were to make a suggestion, I think we have got a lot of work to do to help the American people understand why the risks of action are less than the risks of inaction.

And the question I would ask is this: What more can be done to further communicate with the American people? For example, will the President make a speech from the Oval Office to the American people in one of the coming evenings?

Secretary KERRY. I have no doubt the President will.

Mr. MESSER. Thank you. I have no further questions.

Chairman ROYCE. A minute remaining.

Secretary KERRY. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think for all of us, we just want to thank you. We want to thank, again, the colleagues for taking the time to come back. It is serious. We are not going to disagree with you that we don't need to take advantage of these next days to communicate to our fellow Americans about why this is so critical.

I would just leave you with this. You know, I think, look, General Dempsey and I could—you know, he is correct when he says something technically may be an act of war, and I understand what he is saying, but I don't believe we are going to war. I just don't believe that. Going to war is mobilizing a force, asking people to join up, fighting a long campaign, committing your troops on the ground, fighting to win, and so forth. That is not what we are doing here.

We are asking for permission, the President is asking for permission to take a limited military action, yes, but one that does not put Americans in the middle of the battle, no boots will be on the ground, whereby we enforce a standard of behavior that is critical to our troops, critical to our country, critical to the world.

And most importantly, I mean, if you look at what the option is, if you don't want more extremism, then you should vote for this, because to not vote for it is to guarantee a continuation of this kind of struggle that will encourage extremists, that will even encourage some friends of ours to support them in order to achieve their goal of removing Assad. And that will make that region far, far more dangerous, it will increase the humanitarian crisis, you will see more refugees, more pressure on our friends, Jordanians particu-

larly, who are reeling under that pressure today, and more threat to Israel in the process, more threat to Lebanon in the process.

So I would simply urge, you know, do not send a message to somebody like Bashar al-Assad that he will have impunity now because the one country that can lead this effort, that is the indispensable Nation, is going to walk away from its responsibility. And I think the American people know when you say, do you want to go to war in Syria, no, of course. It should be 100 percent. We don't want to go to war in Syria. We are not going to war in Syria. We are taking an action that is in our interest, in our national security interest in order to enforce a longtime standard. And if that is not enforced, the world will be less safe, and our citizens, no matter where you live in this country, will be less safe because the likelihood is greater that somebody, somewhere, will get their hands on those materials as a result of our inaction.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROYCE. Well, thank you, Mr. Secretary. And on behalf of the committee, I want to take the opportunity to thank all three of you for what has been a long, but productive, and I think certainly a necessary hearing here today before the House. And I would ask also that the State and Defense Departments be prepared to respond promptly to the requests from the committee, requests from our members as they continue to weigh this weighty decision whether to authorize the use of military force against Assad's ability to use chemical weapons.

This hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:20 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Edward R. Royce (R-CA), Chairman

September 4, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live via the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

DATE: Wednesday, September 4, 2013

TIME: 12:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Syria: Weighing the Obama Administration's Response


WITNESSES: The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense

General Martin E. Dempsey
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff
U.S. Department of Defense

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5921 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.



COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date 09/04/13 Room 2172

Starting Time 12:15 P.M. Ending Time 4:20 P.M.

Recesses 0 (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Edward R. Royce, Chairman

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Syria: Weighing the Administration's Response

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See Attendance Sheet.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None.

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

*Rep. Meeks
Rep. Connolly
Rep. Poe*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 4:20 P.M.



Jean Marter, Director of Committee Operations

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Full Committee Hearing

<i>Present</i>	<i>Member</i>
X	Edward R. Royce, CA
X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
X	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, FL
	Dana Rohrabacher, CA
X	Steve Chabot, OH
X	Joe Wilson, SC
X	Michael T. McCaul, TX
X	Ted Poe, TX
X	Matt Salmon, AZ
X	Tom Marino, PA
X	Jeff Duncan, SC
X	Adam Kinzinger, IL
	Mo Brooks, AL
X	Tom Cotton, AR
	Paul Cook, CA
X	George Holding, NC
X	Randy K. Weber, Sr., TX
X	Scott Perry, PA
X	Steve Stockman, TX
X	Ron DeSantis, FL
X	Trey Radel, FL
X	Doug Collins, GA
X	Mark Meadows, NC
X	Ted S. Yoho, FL
X	Luke Messer, IN

<i>Present</i>	<i>Member</i>
X	Eliot L. Engel, NY
	Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, AS
X	Brad Sherman, CA
X	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
X	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
X	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
X	Brian Higgins, NY
X	Karen Bass, CA
X	William Keating, MA
X	David Cicilline, RI
X	Alan Grayson, FL
X	Juan Vargas, CA
X	Bradley S. Schneider, IL
	Joseph P. Kennedy III, MA
X	Ami Bera, CA
X	Alan S. Lowenthal, CA
	Grace Meng, NY
	Lois Frankel, FL
X	Tulsi Gabbard, HI
X	Joaquin Castro, TX

Remarks and Questions
 Congressman Gregory W. Meeks
 Full Committee Hearing:
 Syria: Weighing the Obama Administration's Response
 September 4, 2013

The President's decision to come to Congress for authorization for the use of U.S. military force to address the use of chemical weapons by Syrian forces is the appropriate decision constitutionally and morally. As a member of Congress there is no more grave consideration than whether or not to act militarily. Too often in our nation's modern history we have had incidences where president's have acted without proper consultation with Congress – even when time permitted, and without proper consideration of the enduring consequences on America's global standing and strength. This has been to our detriment.

In making my determination on the use of force, I see the short and long term interest and security of America as my paramount focus. To that end, I believe that the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime is indeed a flagrant violation of international norms against the use of such weapons, and this and other repugnant acts by Syrian forces are indeed against U.S. interests and against the interests of the international community. Therefore, it is both in the U.S. interest and the international communities interest to ensure that the regime's violations are addressed. Acting in any way short of a multilaterally supported military effort is not the best course of action for America.

Regional countries, our NATO and non-NATO allies, the 189 signatories to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and all nations that respect international norms are equally obligated to address the Assad regime's transgressions collectively as an international community. Given that there has been broad global condemnation of the attacks in Syria, it concerns me greatly that what we are currently considering is more or less unilateral action rather than multilaterally supported military intervention.

Secretary Kerry:

Secretary Kerry on August 30, 2013 you stated: "It matters today that we are working as an international community to rid the world of the worst weapons... It matters to our security and the security of our allies... and it matters deeply to the credibility and future interests of the United States of America and our allies... and it is directly related to our credibility and whether countries still believe the United States when it says something." Mr. Secretary it does matter to our credibility, but it also a matter of the credibility of the international community. The use of chemical weapons is a barbaric act that affects us all. Therefore, the United States must act multilaterally, if we act at all. Where is the international community? Where is the broad willingness to join us in rejecting the contemptible act of the Assad regime by supporting limited military reaction?

During the Senate hearing yesterday you indicated that while Russia has obstructed efforts to react to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons there are other ways that Russia may yet prove helpful. Please elaborate on what if any role Russia has or can play in bringing about a

political solution in Syria. How is Russia being engaged given the Obama administrations correct assertion that there is no military solution to the crisis in Syria?

General Dempsey:

I have serious concerns about any action that isn't broadly supported internationally. One of my concerns is the possibility of unintended consequences including the prospects of prolonged military engagement. In mid August (letter dated August 19, 2013 to Rep. Engel) you expressed that there are certainly actions that the U.S. could take short of tipping the balance of the Syrian conflict that could impose a cost on them for abhorrent behavior. You also indicated that at least some of those options would, "escalate and potentially further commit the United States to the conflict...it would not be militarily decisive, but it would commit us decisively to the conflict."

Can you elaborate on what you meant when you stated that we could be decisively committed to the conflict? If the U.S. commits to a limited military strike in Syria, how do we minimize the possibility of a prolonged commitment? If the international support remains as limited as it is now, then aren't the risks of a longer engagement more pronounced?

Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

HCFA Full Committee Hearing: Syria: Weighing the Obama Administration's Response
Wednesday, September 4, 2013
12pm

I want to thank Chairman Royce and Ranking Member Engel for taking swift action to call the House Foreign Affairs Committee back from recess to hold this important hearing on the worsening situation in Syria and its implications for U.S. national security interests and those of our allies in the region.

The United States has exercised great caution with regard to intervening in Syria during the past two and a half years as civil protests against the regime of Bashar al-Assad have turned violent and escalated into outright civil war. While the U.S. has worked to identify and support democratic movements that evolved from the Arab Spring, which is no easy task given the various ethnic factions and interests, the President has made clear repeatedly that his goal is to get the United States out of wars in the Middle East, not to start new ones.

Understandably there is a healthy amount of war weariness not only here in Congress, but also among the American people, because of the physical and emotional scars that linger from the shoddy evidence of so-called weapons of mass destruction that led to the war in Iraq. That military intervention ultimately spiraled into the U.S. being entangled in two wars spanning the past decade and costing the lives of tens of thousands of U.S. troops. However, we must be careful to separate the situation in Iraq with what we and the international community are facing today in Syria.

The Administration has done a very careful and credible job of presenting qualifying evidence to ensure it is not repeating the mistakes of Iraq. In fact, this President, unlike most presidents since World War II, has actually come to Congress as a partner and asked us on behalf of the country to respond to the Assad regime's heinous act of using chemical weapons to attack innocent civilians. I believe the Administration, led by today's witnesses, has presented a strong case to Congress for taking limited action, and I hope we can find a way to try to cooperate and work with the President to further the interests of national security. I am encouraged by supportive comments from the leadership of both the House and Senate in recent days, and I look forward to next week's Floor debate.

In classified and unclassified briefings for Members of Congress, the Administration has presented a preponderance of evidence, collected by U.S. intelligence agencies and our international partners, showing that the Assad regime did unleash chemical weapons on its own people in rebel-occupied communities, resulting in the deaths of more than 1,400 people, including more than 400 children. Though acknowledging the deplorableness of these attacks, some question whether the U.S. truly has an interest or responsibility to respond to these shameful acts.

As the President has said, the use of chemical weapons crosses a "red line," not just by U.S. standards but by international law. Since the late 19th century, the international community has consistently opposed the use of chemical weapons because of the abhorrent death and destruction they can unleash. That norm was ratified by the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which even Syria itself signed in 1968. The U.S. and 188 other countries, comprising 98 percent of the world's population, are parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which became effective in 1997 and prohibits the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling or use of chemical weapons. I would note that five nations have not

Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

signed that agreement, including Syria and North Korea. Congress already is on record, through the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, noting that Syria's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction threatens the security of the Middle East and the national security interests of America.


We must weigh whether it is in U.S. interests to let the recent actions of the Assad regime go unchallenged, or is it in our interest on a limited basis, on a targeted basis, to respond to ensure that message is loud and clear that there is indeed a red line. As Secretary Kerry has said in recent days, we must weigh not only the consequences of taking action, but also the consequences of inaction. The appropriate analogies to be made in this case are Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia and Rwanda. I remind my colleagues that the tug of historical analogies is a powerful force in foreign policy. There are real consequences for doing nothing with respect to the message that would send about America's resolve to rogue regimes like North Korea and Iran and other bad actors in the region. Furthermore, it could create enormous risk for allies like Israel, Turkey, Jordan and others.

If any action is to be taken, it must be limited in scope to provide the American people with the confidence that we will not repeat mistakes of the past. Some of us are old enough to remember the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which ultimately allowed for much wider engagement of U.S. troops in Southeast Asia than was contemplated by Congress or the American people. I and many of my colleagues believe the Administration's draft resolution for the authorization of military force in Syria was overly broad. Now, the President has made clear that no one is talking about boots on the ground in Syria. No one is talking about invading Syria. No one is talking about intervening in the civil war in Syria. What's been talked about is a limited strike, a retaliatory strike, as a deterrent to ensure the use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is not repeated.

To that end, I have been working with Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland on an amended resolution that inserts in the authorization a legally binding stipulation that no ground troops would be deployed. Our resolution also limits the President's authority to a single round of strikes unless Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government should use chemical weapons again; includes a "use-it-or-lose-it" clause to limit this authority to 60 days, consistent with the War Powers Resolution; and narrowly defines the goal of any operation to preventing further use of chemical weapons and not leaving our commitment open ended.

Again, I appreciate the Administration reaching out to engage Congress in this decision. I look forward to today's discussion and next week's debate on the proposal for a limited, measured response to a situation that does have ramifications for the national security interests of America and the rest of the international community.

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE TED POE, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Sides of the Syrian Conflict

Syria- Assad's military and intelligence services	Free Syrian Army- main rebel group led by General Idriss
Shabiha- thugs and gangs fighting for Assad	Al Nusra- Syrian al-Qaeda affiliate
Russia- weapons sold to Assad	Al-Qaeda in Iraq- fighting for al-Qaeda in Syria
Iran- IRGC/QUDS train, advise and assist	Ahrar al-Sham- Salafi jihadists against Assad
Hezbollah- tens of thousands of fighters in Syria	Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, Britain, U.S.- Supporting mostly moderate opposition to varying degrees

(Office of Rep. Ted Poe)

Question for the Record

*Submitted by Chairman Edward R. Royce
To Secretary of State John F. Kerry*

Question 1:

What do you expect the full cost to the American people of your proposed intervention in Syria? Not just the initial strike costs through the Department of Defense, but what will be the entire cost of the effort including the State Department and other parts of the U.S. government? Can these funds be drawn from amounts already appropriated by Congress or will the Administration make an additional funding request?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Questions for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Brad Sherman
To Secretary of State John F. Kerry

Question 1:

The plan which the President has laid out for military actions in Syria is but a small fraction of the actions we took in 2011 in Libya, in both duration and scope. In 2011, the President did not seek Congressional authorization for the Libya operation. Why does the President find it necessary or useful to seek Congressional authorization now when he did not seek such authorization in 2011? Is Congressional approval considered a substitute for the fact that the U.N. Security Council has not authorized the use of force against Syria, while it did against Libya? And in reverse, was the U.N. Security Council Resolution in 2011 a substitute for Congressional authorization of actions against Gaddafi, actions whose duration was such as to require Congressional authorization under the War Powers Resolution of 1973?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 2:

There are two mechanisms for punishing Assad by hurting him militarily. Why is the mechanism you propose better than the alternative policy option described below? Please answer in light of the fact that the proposal to use our forces to strike Syria has, so far, been rejected by the public and may well be defeated on the House floor. We could hurt Assad militarily by arming carefully vetted, moderate rebel elements, and providing out-of-country training. We could do so openly and publicly, demonstrating that the quantity and quality of arms provided far exceeded what we would have done but for Assad's crimes of August 21st, 2013.

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 3:

Please comment on the recent proposal of Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov for the destruction of all Syrian chemical weapons.

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Questions for the Record

*Submitted by the Honorable Jeff Duncan
To Secretary of State John F. Kerry*

Question 1:

The draft AUMF resolution that the President sent to Congress states that the “United States and 188 other countries comprising 98 percent of the world’s population are parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling or use of chemical weapons.” Syria is not a signatory nor is it a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Is the Administration claiming that a treaty is binding on non-party countries if it has widespread support among other parties? Is the Administration asserting that U.S. ratification of the CWC establishes a legal obligation to act militarily if a non-party state uses chemical weapons? If not, what is the purpose of this clause? Which of the 188 countries are willing to use military force in Syria?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 2:

What type of assistance is the U.S. providing to the rebels in Syria? How do we ensure U.S. assistance is going to secular groups and not rebels affiliated with Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda affiliates and associates, or the Muslim Brotherhood? Are we arming the rebels to win or not? How are you vetting the rebels?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Questions for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Jeff Duncan
To Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel

Question 1:

How is President Obama defining victory for the U.S. in Syria? Does the Administration seek to overthrow the Assad regime? Does it seek to deny the regime the ability to launch future chemical attacks? Or, does it wish to punish the regime and launch attacks as part of a deterrent?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 2:

What is the nature of the war in Syria? What is the clear strategic objective of the U.S. with U.S. military intervention in Syria?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 3:

How would an overthrow of the government or launching strikes at Syrian military installations for deterrence purposes effectively secure Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 4:

What is President Obama's clear strategy for war termination in Syria? What steps is the Administration taking to ensure that the U.S. does not repeat past mistakes in failing to consider the conditions of the end of the war?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Questions for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Alan Grayson
To Secretary of State John F. Kerry

Question 1:

What will the proposed attack cost?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 2:

What are Syria's options regarding a counterattack? What has been done to forestall such a counterattack?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 3:

Is it possible that a US attack on Syria will result in a Syrian attack on Israel, similar to what happened when the United States attacked Iraq? Could such an attack be a chemical attack? What would be the appropriate US response?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 4:

Do Syria and Hezbollah have the means to launch a counterattack against US vessels in the Mediterranean? How about the US Embassy in Beirut?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 5:

Is it possible that Russian military advisers in Syria will be killed by this US attack? What is the appropriate US response if Russia comes to the aid of Syria militarily?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 6:

If we do not attack Syria, will any other nation?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 7:

What other countries have made a commitment to join in the attack by launching missiles or dropping bombs? What, exactly, have France and Turkey and Kuwait and the UAE promised to do, if anything?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 8:

Have any members of the Syrian opposition called for such an attack? If so, who? If not, why not?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 9:

Can we wait for the final report of the UN inspectors before voting on military involvement in Syria?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 10:

Will this US military action in Syria end the civil war? Will it overthrow the Assad regime? Will it eliminate the Assad regime's capability to engage in future chemical weapons attacks?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 11:

There are 189 signers of the Chemical Weapons Convention? How many of them have pledged to participate in a military intervention in Syria?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 12:

Has the United States engaged the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, or any other international body regarding Syria's alleged violation of "international norms"?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 13:

Does the contemplated attack include an attack on actual stocks of chemical weapons? Regardless of whether it does or not, do we know with certitude where every stockpile of chemical weapons in Syria is stored? If not, do we risk the spread of these chemicals and more deaths?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 14:

Since civilian casualties have led you here before us today, will you commit to the people of the United States that no civilian deaths will occur in whatever military strike takes place in Syria? Do you have an estimate of such deaths? If so, what is it?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 15:

The Pentagon estimates that there are between 800 and 1,200 rebel groups currently active in Syria. Some of them even support a jihad against the United States. How can we possibly control, or even influence, which one benefits most from our involvement in Syria?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 16:

If the goal is to relieve the suffering of Syrian civilians, wouldn't humanitarian aid to refugees be more effective than launching a military attack? Would a missile strike in Syria help any of the more than two million Syria refugees from this civil war?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 17:

The Assad regime has denied ordering the chemical weapons attack, and Russia is backing the regime in that claim? In light of that, will you declassify the evidence that the Assad regime ordered the attack, in order to prove the Administration right and the Assad regime and Russia wrong?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 18:

Three months ago, the Administration said that it would arm the Syrian rebels. They have not yet been armed. Wouldn't it be more effective and prudent to arm the rebels than to launch a unilateral attack?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 19:

How can the Convention on Chemical Weapons be enforced against Syria when Syria has not signed it? Are there other treaties and conventions that can now be enforced against the United States, even if the United States has not signed them?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 20:

To date, the Administration has claimed that the Syrian government has violated “international norms,” not “international laws.” Is the Administration in fact contending that the Syrian government has violated international laws? If so, which ones, and how? What is the enforcement mechanism outlined in such laws?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 21:

The United Nations Charter forbids unilateral military action by any nation against another. Does the US proposed attack violate the UN Charter?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 22:

Iran’s President, Hasan Rouhani, has condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Have you asked Iran to cut off military aid to Syria if Syria does not comply?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 23:

The International Crisis Group, one of few international organizations with a longstanding presence on the ground in Syria, is unequivocal that diplomatic efforts cannot be re-energized in the wake of a US attack. Is that correct?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 24:

Will military action in Syria require a supplemental appropriation? If you think not, then will you commit now not to request one?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 25:

There has been a report in the media that the Administration has mischaracterized post-attack Syrian military communications, and that these communications actually expressed surprise about the attack. This is a serious charge. Can you release the original transcripts so that the American people can make their own judgment?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 26:

Why is NATO unwilling to participate in this attack? Why is the Arab League unwilling to participate in this attack?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 27:

What the Administration claims Assad has done is a punishable offense under international law, and could be prosecuted. Has the Administration taken any action within the International Criminal Court, or any other international body, to bring Bashar al-Assad to justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 28:

Is unilateral military action by the United States against Syria a violation of international law? If so, then how can the US credibly expect Syria to adhere to international law and “norms”?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 29:

Do we possess any information about the chemical weapons attack that the British government did not have in its possession at the time of Parliament’s decision to not engage militarily in Syria.

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 30:

If subsequent evidence indicates that the Syrian rebels have used chemical weapons, or if the Syrian rebels in the future conduct an attack using chemical weapons, would the Administration attack the rebels?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 31:

The Administration's intelligence reports have indicated that some of its sources are public, such as videos on YouTube and other postings on social media. Why hasn't the Administration identified or released the sources of its intelligence that are already publicly available?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 31:

What is the source of the Administration's fatality estimate? Why is there such a large discrepancy between the Administration's count and that of other organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, and of various groups and institutions within Syria?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Questions for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Alan Grayson
To Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel

Question 1:

What will the proposed attack cost?

Answer:

The President's guidance is that operations in Syria be limited in scope, and the Department expects the costs to also be limited. Costs will depend on the operation's details, but a reasonable range of costs is tens to hundreds of millions of dollars. I cannot be more precise at this time.

Question 2:

What are Syria's options regarding a counterattack? What has been done to forestall such a counterattack?

[RECEIVED BUT CLASSIFIED]

Question 3:

Is it possible that a US attack on Syria will result in a Syrian attack on Israel, similar to what happened when the United States attacked Iraq? Could such an attack be a chemical attack? What would be the appropriate US response?

Answer:

The United States and Israel coordinate on a wide range of security related issues, including the defense of Israel under a variety of plausible threat scenarios. Since the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, I have been in close contact with my Israeli counterpart, Minister Moshe Ya'alon. In these discussions, the United States committed to continuing close coordination to ensure that our militaries are prepared for any contingency. The U.S. commitment to the security of Israel remains unshakable.

Question 4:

Do Syria and Hezbollah have the means to launch a counterattack against US vessels in the Mediterranean? How about the US Embassy in Beirut?

[RECEIVED BUT CLASSIFIED]

Question 5:

Is it possible that Russian military advisers in Syria will be killed by this US attack? What is the appropriate US response if Russia comes to the aid of Syria militarily?

Answer:

It is possible that collateral damage could result from any military action; that being said, U.S. forces take appropriate steps to minimize such damage to the extent possible.

The Department believes it is unlikely that the Russians would intervene militarily on behalf of the regime. At the same time, the United States has been clear with the Russians that their continued military support is unacceptable, as well as inconsistent with the responsibilities of a permanent member of the U.N. Security

Council.

Question 6:

If we do not attack Syria, will any other nation?

Answer:

Other countries are looking to the United States to lead military action against Syria. Although it is possible, I believe it is unlikely that another country would take military action against Syria if the U.S. did not do so.

A broad range of countries and organizations, including the Arab League, have joined the U.S. in condemning the Assad regime's heinous crime. Seven countries publicly went on record in support of U.S. military action, even without a United Nations Security Council mandate: France, Canada, Australia, Turkey, Denmark, Kosovo, and Albania.

Question 7:

What other countries have made a commitment to join in the attack by launching missiles or dropping bombs? What, exactly, have France and Turkey and Kuwait and the UAE promised to do, if anything?

Answer:

Other countries, including France, expressed interest in contributing to military operations responding to Syria's chemical weapons use against civilians. The United States continues to engage several Arab countries about their potential roles. I would also like to point out that a number of countries and organizations, including the Arab League, joined the U.S. in condemning the Assad regime's heinous acts. Seven countries publicly went on record in support of U.S. military action, even without a Security Council mandate: France, Canada, Australia, Turkey, Denmark, Kosovo, and Albania.

In an unclassified forum, I cannot be specific regarding what each country would contribute or their operational roles, but the Department would be glad to brief you in a classified setting.

Question 8:

Have any members of the Syrian opposition called for such an attack? If so, who? If not, why not?

Answer:

Yes, both the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Supreme Military Council, headed by Ahmed Jarba and General Salim Idriss, respectively, called for military action in response to the Assad regime's chemical weapons use against the Syrian people.

Question 9:

Can we wait for the final report of the UN inspectors before voting on military involvement in Syria?

Answer:

The United States does not believe that it should tie its response to a UN report that at most will not reveal any new information. The U.S. and several other countries already possess compelling evidence that the Assad regime used chemical weapons. U.S. testing of hair and blood samples specifically confirms that the Assad regime used sarin. The UN inspectors were asked to determine whether chemical weapons were used, not who used them. Time and again the United Nations Security Council was blocked from acting and fulfilling its

responsibilities, preventing it from holding Assad accountable.

Question 10:

Will this US military action in Syria end the civil war? Will it overthrow the Assad regime? Will it eliminate the Assad regime's capability to engage in future chemical weapons attacks?

Answer:

No, the proposed military action would not be intended to end the civil war or overthrow the Assad regime. As the President has said, "the American people have the good sense to know we cannot resolve the underlying conflict in Syria with our military," while adding that "we're not contemplating putting our troops in the middle of someone else's war." The proposed military action's purpose would be to respond to Syria's chemical weapons use and breach of a clearly-established international norm against the use of such weapons.

By degrading Assad's chemical weapons capability, and deterring the future use of these weapons, military action would make clear to the Assad regime that he will be held accountable for using chemical weapons as a means of waging war against his own people. Assad clearly believes that chemical weapons are of value to him in the fight against the opposition. Limiting Assad's ability to threaten the opposition with chemical weapons would weaken his hand and strengthen theirs.

Question 11:

There are 189 signers of the Chemical Weapons Convention? How many of them have pledged to participate in a military intervention in Syria?

Answer:

Although I cannot get into details of potential contributions to military operations, seven countries publicly went on record supporting U.S. military action even without a United Nations Security Council mandate: France, Canada, Australia, Turkey, Denmark, Kosovo, and Albania. Of those countries, only Kosovo is not a state party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Question 12:

Has the United States engaged the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, or any other international body regarding Syria's alleged violation of "international norms"?

Answer:

Yes, the United States has been actively engaging the United Nations throughout the crisis. The U.S. wants the Security Council to embrace its responsibility and take action, but thus far it has been blocked from acting. On three previous occasions, Security Council resolutions that would have authorized measures short of the use of force to address the crisis were blocked by the exercise of a veto by two permanent Council members.

Since the Assad regime began its brutal campaign against the Syrian people, the United States has been clear that those responsible for the atrocities in Syria must be held accountable. Syria is not party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the Security Council's inaction on Syria makes clear that there is no realistic prospect that it would refer the Syrian situation to the ICC, or agree to establish an international criminal tribunal as was done for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Given this reality, the United States is focused on supporting efforts by the international community to gather evidence that could help build the foundation for future efforts to hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Syria.

Question 13:

Does the contemplated attack include an attack on actual stocks of chemical weapons? Regardless of whether it does or not, do we know with certitude where every stockpile of chemical weapons in Syria is stored? If not, do we risk the spread of these chemicals and more deaths?

Answer:

[DELETED]

Question 14:

Since civilian casualties have led you here before us today, will you commit to the people of the United States that no civilian deaths will occur in whatever military strike takes place in Syria? Do you have an estimate of such deaths? If so, what is it?

Answer:

At the President's direction, I ordered Defense planners to take every possible precaution to minimize the likelihood of civilian casualties. Should the President direct military action, the United States will make every effort to avoid striking any civilian infrastructure or non-combatants and minimize collateral damage.

Without getting into the details of military planning or collateral damage estimates, I assure you that defense planners work carefully to ensure minimal damage under all the options they are developing.

Question 15:

The Pentagon estimates that there are between 800 and 1,200 rebel groups currently active in Syria. Some of them even support a jihad against the United States. How can we possibly control, or even influence, which one benefits most from our involvement in Syria?

Answer:

The United States' strategy in Syria involves supporting the moderate, vetted opposition so that it can more effectively engage the regime and gain strength at the expense of extremists. U.S. assistance, administered primarily by the State Department, is channeled to the moderate opposition and away from extremists. The United States has urged other countries to take the same precautions and is coordinating U.S. assistance efforts with international partners. The President has prioritized disrupting efforts by extremists to seize power or establish safe havens in Syria, designating the al Nusra Front as a terrorist organization.

Following on the credible evidence that the Assad regime used chemical weapons against the Syrian people, the President authorized the expansion of U.S. assistance to the opposition Supreme Military Council (SMC). This expansion of assistance is intended to strengthen the opposition's cohesion, and the effectiveness of the SMC's efforts to defend itself against a repressive regime that has shown no boundaries in its willingness to kill civilians. I cannot detail all of the support that the U.S. is providing, but it is important to note that both the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the SMC are receiving U.S. assistance. This effort is also aimed at helping to coordinate the provision of assistance by the United States and other partners and allies.

Question 16:

If the goal is to relieve the suffering of Syrian civilians, wouldn't humanitarian aid to refugees be more effective than launching a military attack? Would a missile strike in Syria help any of the more than two million Syria refugees from this civil war?

Answer:

I agree that the humanitarian situation resulting from the Syrian conflict is very serious and that relieving the suffering of civilians is critical. That is why the United States donated more humanitarian assistance than any other single donor—more than \$1 billion to date—to help the Syrian people, including internally displaced persons and refugees.

The President stated clearly the objectives of the proposed military action: preventing and deterring the use and proliferation of chemical weapons (CW) within, to, or from Syria; degrading the Assad regime's capacity to carry out future CW attacks; and deterring this behavior in others—including Iran, Hezbollah, and North Korea—who could otherwise feel emboldened to use such weapons.

Question 17:

The Assad regime has denied ordering the chemical weapons attack, and Russia is backing the regime in that claim? In light of that, will you declassify the evidence that the Assad regime ordered the attack, in order to prove the Administration right and the Assad regime and Russia wrong?

Answer:

The United States and other countries made clear to Russia that there is irrefutable evidence the Syrian regime conducted this attack. Since the attack the U.S. has made an unprecedented amount of intelligence publicly available, as well as privately to members of Congress and their staffs, so that the American people, the Congress, and U.S. allies have clear information about the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons. Because intelligence may come from multiple sources, each with different declassification requirements and procedures, declassification of any intelligence product would have to go through the customary declassification process with the Intelligence Community.

Question 18:

Three months ago, the Administration said that it would arm the Syrian rebels. They have not yet been armed. Wouldn't it be more effective and prudent to arm the rebels than to launch a unilateral attack?

Answer:

The President said that the use of chemical weapons would change his calculus, and it has. Following on credible evidence that the regime previously used chemical weapons against the Syrian people, the President authorized additional assistance for the rebel's Supreme Military Council (SMC). This additional assistance is aimed at strengthening the cohesion of the opposition, and the effectiveness of the SMC's efforts to defend themselves against a repressive regime that knows no bounds in its willingness to kill civilians. It is important to note that both the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the SMC are receiving U.S. assistance. This effort is aimed at helping to coordinate the provision of assistance by the United States and other partners. Put simply, the Assad regime should know that its actions have led the United States to broaden the scope and scale of assistance provided to the opposition, including direct support to the SMC. The Department will continue to consult with Congress on this as these efforts progress.

It is important that the United States pursues a multi-faceted approach to Syria, including non-lethal aid to the Syrian people. In January of this year the President announced that the U.S. would give an additional \$155 million in humanitarian aid for the people of Syria, and in June he announced that the U.S. would provide \$300 million more, bringing the total to more than \$1 billion to date of U.S. aid since the crisis began. To date, the U.S. has delivered over 335,000 "meals ready to eat" (MREs) and over two plane loads of various medical supplies for the SMC and the Syrian people for which the Syrian opposition has been grateful. The U.S.

remains the single-largest contributor of humanitarian assistance of food aid, medical care, clean water, shelter, and other relief supplies to the people of Syria.

That said, the President clearly stated the objectives of a proposed military strike: preventing and deterring the use and proliferation of chemical weapons (CW) within, to, or from Syria; degrading the Assad regime's capacity to carry out future CW attacks; and deterring this behavior in others—including Iran, Hezbollah, and North Korea—who would otherwise feel emboldened to use such weapons.

Question 19:

How can the Convention on Chemical Weapons be enforced against Syria when Syria has not signed it? Are there other treaties and conventions that can now be enforced against the United States, even if the United States has not signed them?

Answer:

On August 21, 2013, Syria engaged in a horrific, large-scale, and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, which violated clearly established international norms against the use of such weapons, and the law of war. For more than a century, the international community has been taking steps to prohibit the use of chemical weapons. As the President has stated, as a result of these efforts, the governments of 98 percent of the world's population are Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances.

The President has decided that the United States needs to prevent and deter Syria from further use of chemical weapons. The international norms against the use or proliferation of chemical weapons need to be kept in place. We cannot tolerate violations of these norms, particularly where there is a possibility that chemical weapons that can have devastating effects could be directed at our partners and allies in the region or against the United States. The President, thus, has determined that there is a legitimate basis to authorize the use of force against Syria.

Question 20:

To date, the Administration has claimed that the Syrian government has violated “international norms,” not “international laws.” Is the Administration in fact contending that the Syrian government has violated international laws? If so, which ones, and how? What is the enforcement mechanism outlined in such laws?

Answer:

The Syrian regime engaged in a horrific, large-scale, and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, which violated clearly-established international norms against the use of such weapons, as well as the law of war. The international community has been taking steps for more than a century to prohibit the use of chemical weapons. As the President stated, the governments of 98 percent of the world's population are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a result of these efforts, which prohibits the use of chemical weapons. Despite both public and private warnings not to use chemical weapons, the Assad regime did just that, killing scores of its own people, including hundreds of innocent children.

The August 21 incident is just the latest in a series of egregious actions taken by the regime in violation of international norms. Within recent months, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Syria both condemned the Syrian regime and concluded that regime forces and affiliated militia committed war crimes and gross violations of international human rights law. These violations include the use of heavy weapons, aerial bombardments, and other force against civilians; attacks on schools, hospitals, and places of worship; massacres and arbitrary executions; and the killing and persecution of protestors, human rights defenders, and journalists.

Question 21:

The United Nations Charter forbids unilateral military action by any nation against another. Does the US proposed attack violate the UN Charter?

Answer:

The Syrian regime engaged in a horrific, large-scale, and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, which violated clearly-established international norms against the use of such weapons, as well as the law of war. The proposed U.S. military action—particularly where the Security Council has been prevented from acting and fulfilling its responsibilities—is a legitimate, necessary, and proportionate response to this horrific act. Moreover, any U.S. response shall be specifically designed to deter and prevent further use of these weapons by the Assad regime and to reduce the risk of proliferation of these weapons, including the risk of their falling in the hands of terrorists, which threatens us all.

Within recent months, the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Syria have condemned the Syrian regime, concluding that regime forces and affiliated militia have committed war crimes and gross violations of international human rights law. These violations include the use of heavy weapons, aerial bombardments, and other force against civilians; attacks on schools, hospitals, and places of worship; massacres and arbitrary executions; and the killing and persecution of protestors, human rights defenders, and journalists.

The United States believes that at times like this the UN Security Council should live up to its obligations and responsibility to act. That is why for two and one-half years the U.S. supported Security Council press statements, Security Council presidential statements, and Security Council resolutions seeking to address a whole host of Syria-related concerns, each time hoping that common security concerns and common humanity might prevail. The United States has repeatedly made the case that countries on the Council should be motivated by shared interest in international peace and security, in protecting civilians, but also in preventing extremism, regional spillover, and chemical weapons use. In this context, it should be noted that no final decisions on military action have been made, and that the United States continues to work with international partners on its response options, including action through the Security Council.

Question 22:

Iran's President, Hasan Rouhani, has condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Have you asked Iran to cut off military aid to Syria if Syria does not comply?

Answer:

The United States and its partners regularly highlight the destabilizing role Iran's lethal aid to Syria plays in sustaining the brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad. The U.S. will continue to expose such destabilizing Iranian involvement in Syria, and to call upon Iran to change course. Since Iran was itself a victim of chemical weapon attacks by Saddam Hussein, I hope the newly elected leadership in Tehran will take a different approach in Syria and cease its support of the Assad regime.

Question 23:

The International Crisis Group, one of few international organizations with a longstanding presence on the ground in Syria, is unequivocal that diplomatic efforts cannot be re-energized in the wake of a US attack. Is that correct?

Answer:

If the international community fails to respond to Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against civilians on August 21, 2013, it would undercut attempts to re-energize diplomatic efforts to bring about a negotiated, political transition based on the foundations of the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. If a limited, targeted strike is carried out, such as the one contemplated by the United States, the conditions for successful diplomatic efforts will be substantially more favorable than if there were to be no response.

Question 24:

Will military action in Syria require a supplemental appropriation? If you think not, then will you commit now not to request one?

Answer:

The Administration has indicated that it does not currently plan to submit a supplemental funding request.

Question 25:

There has been a report in the media that the Administration has mischaracterized post-attack Syrian military communications, and that these communications actually expressed surprise about the attack. This is a serious charge. Can you release the original transcripts so that the American people can make their own judgment?

Answer:

The United States possesses ample evidence indicating that the Syrian regime conducted the attack. Since the attack, the U.S. has made public an unprecedented amount of intelligence, while also providing additional intelligence privately to members of Congress and their staffs—all with the goal of ensuring that the American people, the Congress, and our Allies and partners have accurate, substantiated information on the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons.

Question 26:

Why is NATO unwilling to participate in this attack? Why is the Arab League unwilling to participate in this attack?

Answer:

A broad range of countries and organizations, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Arab League, joined the United States in condemning the brutal August 21, 2013, attacks for violating international norms. On September 2, 2013, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen said: "I think there is an agreement that we need a firm international response in order to avoid that chemical attacks take place in the future. It would send, I would say, a dangerous signal to dictators all over the world if we stand idly by and don't react." Arab League Foreign Ministers concluded during their September 1, 2013, meeting that the Syrian government was responsible for chemical weapons attacks against the Syrian people and called for the United Nations and the international community to "take the deterrent and necessary measures against the culprits of this crime that the Syrian regime bears responsibility for."

Several countries expressed interest in contributing to military operations, and the United States continues to engage with regional and European partners about their potential roles.

Question 27:

What the Administration claims Assad has done is a punishable offense under international law, and could be prosecuted. Has the Administration taken any action within the International Criminal Court, or any other international body, to bring Bashar al-Assad to justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity?

Answer:

Since the Assad regime began its brutal campaign against the Syrian people, the United States has been clear that those responsible for the atrocities in Syria must be held accountable. Syria is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the United Nations Security Council's inaction on Syria makes clear that there is no realistic prospect that it would refer the Syrian situation to the ICC, or agree to establish an international criminal tribunal as was done for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Given this reality, the United States focused on supporting efforts by the international community to gather evidence that could help build the foundation for future efforts to hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Syria.

Question 28:

Is unilateral military action by the United States against Syria a violation of international law? If so, then how can the US credibly expect Syria to adhere to international law and "norms"?

Answer:

The United States believes that the Assad regime's actions leave no choice but to act, and that the proposed military response is legitimate. The horrific attack of August 21, 2013, threatens regional and international security and stability, including ours, and demands a response, particularly in circumstances in which the Security Council was prevented from acting and fulfilling its responsibilities. The Syrian regime engaged in a horrific, large-scale, and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, which violated clearly established international norms against the use of such weapons, as well as the law of war. Any U.S. military response would be a legitimate, necessary, and proportionate response, and specifically designed to deter and prevent further use of these weapons by the Assad regime. Such a response would also reduce the risks of proliferation of these weapons and of their falling into the hands of terrorists, which threatens us all.

In circumstances where there are no reasonable alternatives, I believe that the United States is fully justified in taking action. In this context, it should be noted that no final decisions have been made, and that the United States continues to work with international partners on response options, including through the United Nations Security Council.

Question 29:

Do we possess any information about the chemical weapons attack that the British government did not have in its possession at the time of Parliament's decision to not engage militarily in Syria.

Answer:

I cannot speak to what information the British government did or did not have in its possession at the time of the Parliament's decision not to engage militarily in Syria.

Question 30:

If subsequent evidence indicates that the Syrian rebels have used chemical weapons, or if the Syrian rebels in the future conduct an attack using chemical weapons, would the Administration attack the rebels?

Answer:

The United States does not possess evidence that the Syrian rebels acquired chemical weapons. That said, the U.S. continues to take any allegations of chemical weapons use seriously, and will rigorously investigate any future allegations of chemical weapons use. The Administration stands with the international community in protecting the norms which condemn the use of chemical weapons.

The President has made clear that the violation of this established international norm cannot be tolerated.

Question 31:

The Administration's intelligence reports have indicated that some of its sources are public, such as videos on YouTube and other postings on social media. Why hasn't the Administration identified or released the sources of its intelligence that are already publicly available?

Answer:

Since the attack on August 21, 2013, the United States has made an unprecedented attempt to make intelligence available so that the American people, the Congress, and our Allies and partners have clear information on the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons. However, intelligence may be derived from multiple sources, and there are different sensitivities pertaining to identification or declassification of particular sources (individually or in the aggregate).

Question 32:

What is the source of the Administration's fatality estimate? Why is there such a large discrepancy between the Administration's count and that of other organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, and of various groups and institutions within Syria?

Answer:

[RECEIVED BUT CLASSIFIED]



Questions for the Record

*Submitted by the Honorable Alan Grayson
To General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

Question 1:

What will the proposed attack cost?

Answer:

The direct costs will be proportional to the limited scope of the strikes.

Question 2:

What are Syria's options regarding a counterattack? What has been done to forestall such a counterattack?

Answer:

[DELETED]

Question 3:

Is it possible that a US attack on Syria will result in a Syrian attack on Israel, similar to what happened when the United States attacked Iraq? Could such an attack be a chemical attack? What would be the appropriate US response?

Answer:

[DELETED]

Question 4:

Do Syria and Hezbollah have the means to launch a counterattack against US vessels in the Mediterranean? How about the US Embassy in Beirut?

Answer:

[RECEIVED BUT CLASSIFIED]

Question 5:

Is it possible that Russian military advisers in Syria will be killed by this US attack? What is the appropriate US response if Russia comes to the aid of Syria militarily?

Answer:

As has been reported in the press, many Russian personnel have departed Syria. While we are carefully planning so as to avoid collateral damage, we cannot rule out the possibility that Russian advisors or technicians could be inadvertently struck. We have warned Russia about the risks to Russian personnel.

Question 6:

If we do not attack Syria, will any other nation?

Answer:

Several nations possess the ability to conduct military strikes in Syria, including some of our closest partners. Whether these countries decide to conduct military operations is a decision they will have to make as sovereign nations.

Question 7:

What other countries have made a commitment to join in the attack by launching missiles or dropping bombs? What, exactly, have France and Turkey and Kuwait and the UAE promised to do, if anything?

Answer:

Many of our partners, to include France, Turkey, Kuwait and the UAE, have expressed very strong concerns with the conduct of the Assad Regime and are working with us on a comprehensive, multi-lateral solution. Although it is inappropriate to publically discuss the precise and confidential positions of these countries, we have discussed a full range of options with our key European and regional partners.

Question 8:

Have any members of the Syrian opposition called for such an attack? If so, who? If not, why not?

Answer:

[RECEIVED BUT CLASSIFIED]

Question 9:

Can we wait for the final report of the UN inspectors before voting on military involvement in Syria?

Answer:

The United States government has focused on supporting the mission of the UN Inspectors to gather evidence that could help build the foundation of future efforts to hold accountable those responsible for atrocities in Syria. However, my role is to advise the President on our capacity to execute military options to achieve our objectives. I have advised him that we will be able to conduct effective strikes should he give the order.

Question 10:

Will this US military action in Syria end the civil war? Will it overthrow the Assad regime? Will it eliminate the Assad regime's capability to engage in future chemical weapons attacks?

Answer:

The strikes alone will not eliminate Assad's ability to use chemical weapons in the future, although strikes would degrade Assad capability. My role is to provide options to employ military force to achieve objectives as directed by the President. In this case, he called for options for a limited strike to deter and degrade the Assad regime's further use of chemical weapons – and not specifically to end the civil war or to overthrow the Assad regime.

Question 11:

There are 189 signers of the Chemical Weapons Convention? How many of them have pledged to participate in a military intervention in Syria?

Answer:

We continue to work with our key partners, many of whom have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, on a range of options to deter the Assad Regime's assault on Syria's civilian population. Options will include participation from multiple countries, but details have not been finalized.

Question 12:

Has the United States engaged the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, or any other international body regarding Syria's alleged violation of "international norms"?

Answer:

I would have to defer to the Department of State to comment on their efforts to engage the United Nations, the International Criminal Court or any other international body regarding this issue.

Question 13:

Does the contemplated attack include an attack on actual stocks of chemical weapons? Regardless of whether it does or not, do we know with certitude where every stockpile of chemical weapons in Syria is stored? If not, do we risk the spread of these chemicals and more deaths?

Answer:

[DELETED]

Question 14:

Since civilian casualties have led you here before us today, will you commit to the people of the United States that no civilian deaths will occur in whatever military strike takes place in Syria? Do you have an estimate of such deaths? If so, what is it?

Answer:

[DELETED]

Question 15:

The Pentagon estimates that there are between 800 and 1,200 rebel groups currently active in Syria. Some of them even support a jihad against the United States. How can we possibly control, or even influence, which one benefits most from our involvement in Syria?

Answer:

[DELETED]

Question 16:

If the goal is to relieve the suffering of Syrian civilians, wouldn't humanitarian aid to refugees be more effective than launching a military attack? Would a missile strike in Syria help any of the more than two million Syria refugees from this civil war?

Answer:

Our approach to Syria is multifaceted. The U.S. government continues to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees through a variety of means, and is in fact the single largest donor of Humanitarian assistance to

the Syrian people. As Chairman, I was asked to provide options to the President to employ military forces to achieve limited objectives to deter and degrade Assad's ability to use chemical weapons. These strikes may have second order effects associated with them that could alleviate some of the suffering of Syrian civilians.

Question 17:

The Assad regime has denied ordering the chemical weapons attack, and Russia is backing the regime in that claim? In light of that, will you declassify the evidence that the Assad regime ordered the attack, in order to prove the Administration right and the Assad regime and Russia wrong?

Answer:

I defer to the Office of the Director for National Intelligence on issues related to declassification of intelligence related to regime use of chemical weapons.

Question 18:

Three months ago, the Administration said that it would arm the Syrian rebels. They have not yet been armed. Wouldn't it be more effective and prudent to arm the rebels than to launch a unilateral attack?

Answer:

Lethal support to the opposition remains an option, and if the Department of Defense is asked to provide options and execute, we will do so. In the current situation, I was asked to provide options to the President to employ military force to achieve limited objectives to deter and degrade Assad's ability to use chemical weapons.

Question 19:

How can the Convention on Chemical Weapons be enforced against Syria when Syria has not signed it? Are there other treaties and conventions that can now be enforced against the United States, even if the United States has not signed them?

Answer:

I defer to the Department of State to comment on interpretations of international law. That said, it is in the interest of the signatories to enforce the international standard against chemical weapons use.

Question 20:

To date, the Administration has claimed that the Syrian government has violated "international norms," not "international laws." Is the Administration in fact contending that the Syrian government has violated international laws? If so, which ones, and how? What is the enforcement mechanism outlined in such laws?

Answer:

I defer to the Department of State to comment on interpretations of international law.

Question 21:

The United Nations Charter forbids unilateral military action by any nation against another. Does the US proposed attack violate the UN Charter?

Answer:

I defer to the Department of State to comment on interpretations of international law.

Question 22:

Iran's President, Hasan Rouhani, has condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Have you asked Iran to cut off military aid to Syria if Syria does not comply?

Answer:

I defer to the Department of State to comment on efforts to engage with Iran diplomatically regarding their activities in Syria.

Question 23:

The International Crisis Group, one of few international organizations with a longstanding presence on the ground in Syria, is unequivocal that diplomatic efforts cannot be re-energized in the wake of a US attack. Is that correct?

Answer:

Our military action in this case is very focused on deterring and degrading future use of chemical weapons. We believe that Assad may respond to the pressure of limited strikes with a greater interest in a diplomatic solution.

Question 24:

Will military action in Syria require a supplemental appropriation? If you think not, then will you commit now not to request one?

Answer:

The costs will be proportional to the scope of the strikes as directed by the President. Though at this time we do not anticipate seeking a supplemental, there is always the possibility one may ultimately be needed.

Question 25:

There has been a report in the media that the Administration has mischaracterized post-attack Syrian military communications, and that these communications actually expressed surprise about the attack. This is a serious charge. Can you release the original transcripts so that the American people can make their own judgment?

Answer:

I defer to the Director of National Intelligence regarding the release of the original transcript.

Question 26:

Why is NATO unwilling to participate in this attack? Why is the Arab League unwilling to participate in this attack?

Answer:

As a defensive Alliance, a NATO decision to participate would require agreement among all 28 members.

The Arab League pledged to hold the Syrian Regime responsible for the chemical attacks on their own people and openly condemned Assad's use of chemical weapons. The Arab League is currently pursuing available

diplomatic options prior to committing to military action – and is supporting on-going efforts in the United Nations to draft to resolution outlining the way ahead for Syria, to include the potential authorization of the use of force. A number of Arab League countries have also indicated their willingness to participate in or provide support for US-led actions.

Question 27:

What the Administration claims Assad has done is a punishable offense under international law, and could be prosecuted. Has the Administration taken any action within the International Criminal Court, or any other international body, to bring Bashar al-Assad to justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity?

Answer:

I defer to the Department of State to comment on the state of our diplomatic efforts with different international bodies, including the International Criminal Court.

Question 28:

Is unilateral military action by the United States against Syria a violation of international law? If so, then how can the US credibly expect Syria to adhere to international law and “norms”?

Answer:

I defer to the Department of State to comment on interpretations of international law.

Question 29:

Do we possess any information about the chemical weapons attack that the British government did not have in its possession at the time of Parliament’s decision to not engage militarily in Syria.

Answer:

I defer to the Director of National Intelligence regarding the discussions they had with their British counterparts on this issue.

Question 30:

If subsequent evidence indicates that the Syrian rebels have used chemical weapons, or if the Syrian rebels in the future conduct an attack using chemical weapons, would the Administration attack the rebels?

Answer:

Our intelligence assessment indicates clearly that the Syrian regime has engaged in this horrific, large-scale, and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons. My role is to provide options to employ military force to achieve objectives as directed by the President, which in this case concerns deterring and degrading Assad’s further use of chemical weapons.

Question 31:

The Administration’s intelligence reports have indicated that some of its sources are public, such as videos on YouTube and other postings on social media. Why hasn’t the Administration identified or released the sources of its intelligence that are already publicly available?

Answer:

I defer to the Office of the Director for National Intelligence on issues related identifying any sources of national intelligence assessments.

Question 32:

What is the source of the Administration's fatality estimate? Why is there such a large discrepancy between the Administration's count and that of other organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, and of various groups and institutions within Syria?

Answer:

[RECEIVED BUT CLASSIFIED]

Question 33:

Do you believe Russia will seek to resupply Assad's forces with replacements for the assets the proposed strikes take out? Would you recommend going back to destroy or disable these assets again? How many times do you do this?

Answer::

These limited strikes are intended to degrade and deter Assad's regime use of chemical weapons, but will not necessarily prevent future use. Should the regime nonetheless use chemical weapons again in an indiscriminate, large scale manner, we maintain the ability to take further limited and targeted action. I would defer to the US Department of State on Russia's intentions following proposed US strikes.



Questions for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Mo Brooks
To Secretary of State John F. Kerry

Question 1:

If Congress does not authorize the use of force in Syria, will the President act regardless?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 2:

The resolution states that the purpose of the military action is to “prevent or deter the use or proliferation (including the transfer to terrorist groups or other state or non-state actors), within, to or from Syria, of any weapons of mass destruction, including chemical or biological weapons or components of or materials used in such weapons” or to “protect the United States and its allies and partners against the threat posed by such weapons.” How exactly will a ‘narrow and limited’ military strike prevent the transfer of such weapons to other state or non-state actors? How will the administration verify that no such transfers occur?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 3:

Reportedly, the administration has agreed to do “more for the Syrian rebels” including providing arms. How confident is the administration that additional support to the Syrian rebels will not be diverted to Islamic extremists? How will you verify that this does not happen?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 4:

The President stated that the August 21 chemical weapons attack “presents a serious danger to our national security.” Is there a direct national security interest to the US? Could you clearly list the specific threats to U.S. national security that arose from that attack? Could you explain why previous chemical weapons attacks did not similarly pose a danger to U.S. national security? What about the consequences of the conflict not related to the August 21 attack, including over 100,000 war related casualties and 2 million refugees, do they not endanger our national security?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 5:

The New York Times reported that offers of “military assets” have come from France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. Could you specify what military assets have been offered? Will any countries

other than France be active participants in the military operation? What efforts have been made to get Arab partners more involved?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

Question 6:

Should an attack go forward, what is the likely response from Iran, Russia, and China? What are our contingencies if they do respond?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Question for the Record

*Submitted by the Honorable George Holding
To Secretary of State John F. Kerry*

Question 1:

It is not a given that limited strikes will compel the Assad regime to stop their use of chemical weapons as Assad has already proved he will stop at nothing to retain power. What will this administration do if he escalates his use? You mentioned he would be "foolish" to do so but will this administration consider escalating their military response should this happen?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]



Question for the Record

*Submitted by the Honorable George Holding
To General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

Question 1:

Do you believe Russia will seek to resupply Assad's forces with replacements for the assets the proposed strikes take out? Would you recommend going back to destroy or disable these assets again? How many times do you do this?

Answer:

[RESPONSE NOT RECEIVED AT TIME OF PRINTING]

